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GOBLIN GIRL

MAID SERVICE

OMNIBUS BOOKS 1-3

Goblin Girl Maid Service Omnibus

Books 1-3: A Slice-of-Life Fantasy Adventure

Monster Girl Maids
Book 1

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Goblin Girl Maid Service

A Slice-of-Life Fantasy Adventure

Chapter One

"WHERE AM I?"

Those first words came tumbling out of my mouth as soon as I realized something was very much not right.

This was *definitely* not my apartment.

I was in what appeared to be a doctor's office of all places, but how I got there was anyone's guess. It was one weird office too. I was sitting on one of those elevated examination tables, and the desk in front of me was nearly empty.

I didn't see anything that resembled a stethoscope or a thermometer. Not even a damn tongue depressor either.

I was thinking this had to be some kind of dream. It might even be a good dream where some supermodel doctor came in that needed me to give me a physical. I would have a hard time saying no to that.

Still, I wasn't one to just sit here on this table forever, so I hopped on the ground to walk over to the door. Jiggling the knob, I could see that it was locked from the outside.

"That's definitely not a good sign," I muttered to myself.

My visions of a good dream morphed into something darker. Now I just wanted to wake up before some foul demon showed up wanting to take my temperature the bad way.

But I still didn't remember going to sleep. If this was a dream, how come I couldn't wake up?

I closed my eyes, searching my brain for my last visible memory. I was doing . . . something. Walking home from my dead-end job.

And now I'm here. Nothing made sense.

I was just about to start panicking when I saw the knob on the door jiggle. Suddenly, the door swung open and a full-sized centaur walked (or should I say galloped?) into the room.

It was the last thing I expected to see. He looked exactly like I expected a centaur to look. From the waist up, he looked like any normal doctor might look. I judged him to be about twenty years older than me, which put him around his mid-forties. He was even wearing a lab coat just like any doctor would, but once I looked below the waist, that's where it got downright strange.

Four black hooves supported a horse's body that was full of chestnut-brown hair. A black tail even swished around, half-landing on the desk before swishing back the other direction.

It would have been halfway comical to see a lab coat-wearing centaur in front of me if I wasn't so spooked by his sudden appearance.

"Holy shit!" I said, jumping backward. "I really don't need my temperature taken. All I want to do is wake up now."

If he was surprised by my reaction, he didn't show it. He flipped open a medical chart and took a step closer.

"I'm afraid that's very impossible for your current situation, Kevin," he said, looking up from his notes. "You're not dreaming right now."

"How do you know my name?" I asked. "And how do you know I'm not dreaming? This feels just like a dream."

He closed the chart, and that's when I noticed that he had a name tag pinned to his jacket. His name was Richie. "In what way?"

"Uh, hello? You're a centaur that's playing as a doctor," I said before shaking my head. "I knew I shouldn't have eaten Crazy Sam's brownies earlier today. He must have spiked them again."

"He didn't," confirmed Richie. "Your coworker Sam didn't spike this batch. The last one backfired on him after he mistakenly gave one to his grandfather, making him trip his 'ever-living balls off.' Sam vowed never to do it again after he witnessed his grandfather mowing the grass in the nude. You can say he learned his lesson after that."

"Okay, what's going on?" I said, trying to wipe visions of old naked dudes out of my brain. "This has to be a dream. There's no way this isn't a dream."

“Yeah, most people tend to think that after they’ve been reborn,” confirmed Richie. “Especially you humans. You have the hardest time letting go after realizing you’re really dead.”

Now he had my attention. I was . . . what now?

“Wait a second,” I snapped. “I’m dead? You’re not messing with me?”

Richie gave me a pointed look. “Not even close, Kevin. Death isn’t something to joke about if you ask me. But you are most certainly dead. And it was rather gruesome if I might add.”

My next question was obvious.

“How did I die?”

Richie’s tail flickered from side to side. “You sure you want to know? Most people don’t, and those that find out usually regret it.”

“Listen, if you really want me to believe that this isn’t some twisted fantasy nightmare, you need to tell me what happened right now.”

Richie sighed. “Well, alright then. You were walking home from your early shift at your job. It was midafternoon in your city, and you were moving through an area with a lot of high-rise buildings. Unfortunately, a window-cleaning crew experienced a failure with the winch system that held up their platform, causing it to free fall to the ground below. You happened to be standing right where it landed.”

I was in a state of shock by the time he finished. “You mean to tell me that . . . that I . . .”

“Was flattened like a pancake by a heavy metal spatula?” finished Richie. “Yes, that’s exactly what I’m saying.”

“Wow,” I said quietly.

No wonder my last memory was walking on the sidewalk. If what Richie was saying was true, I was likely dead before I knew what happened.

And yet, I guess if there was any way to die, that was probably the best way, all things considered. At least it was quick and painless. It didn’t take much of a sting off being dead, but it helped to know I didn’t suffer.

Richie put a comforting hand on my shoulder. “Chin up now, Kevin. Everything is going to get much better from here, I promise you.”

“Why’s that? And where is here exactly? Is this heaven?”

Richie chuckled. “No, of course not. This is so much better. This is Dragonmont City!”

I blinked at him several times, waiting for him to expand on that. “Dragonmont City. Where is that exactly?”

Richie opened his mouth and shut it promptly. A frown took hold on his face. “You don’t know about Dragonmont City?”

“No, I must have missed the memo all the *other* times I died,” I said sarcastically.

“Hmm,” said Richie, reaching up to rub his chin and missing most of my sarcasm. “That is a bit peculiar. But it’s no matter! This is a good thing.”

Richie clapped his hands together suddenly as he grinned. “Dragonmont City is the preeminent city in the fantasy land of Vinaria! It’s a beautiful, exotic, wonderful city where all fantasy creatures live together in harmony.”

“All fantasy creatures?” I asked, eyeing him once more. “You mean there are more centaurs there?”

“Of course there are,” he said, giving me an absurd look. “You didn’t think I was the only centaur around, did you?”

I shrugged, which only made Richie laugh. “No, there are many thousands more of us! And elves too! Everything from dwarves, orcs, goblins, dryads, banshees, dragons, and even some humans too. All of them live here in Dragonmont City.”

“How?” I asked. “Did they all die like me? Were they all reborn here?”

“Not quite,” replied Richie. “You’re somewhat special in that regard. Most of the creatures in Dragonmont City are born here, but only a select few souls are chosen by the RLD to start over here.”

“RLD?” I asked, feeling stupid.

“The Re-Life Department of the city,” said Richie proudly before tapping his chest. “That’s where I work, of course. The Re-Life Department, or RLD, is responsible for doling out second chances to those that truly deserve them. And judging by the looks of your file, you really deserve a second chance.”

At that point, I realized the chart he was holding wasn’t filled with my medical records but more a record of my life. Especially as Richie started to skim through it with lightning speed.

“No siblings, parents died young, only had one aunt who passed away two years ago from leukemia, very sad,” read Richie. “Not to mention the dead-end office job with a boss that treats you like you’re nothing more than an automated drone.”

Richie was right on the money about that one. I wouldn’t say I hated my boss Brock, but if I never saw him again, I’d be very happy with that.

“Not even a girlfriend, what a pity,” continued Richie.

“Hey now, I had a girlfriend a couple months back,” I argued, feeling defensive.

“You did, but Shelly wanted to marry someone with money, and as soon as she figured out she could have better, she didn’t let the door hit her ass on the way out.”

Okay, that one still stung a little. I knew Shelly could probably be classified as a gold-digger, but I still loved her at one point. I just never expected our relationship to be so . . . transactional.

“And now here you are,” said Richie, closing the file completely. “Yes, you most certainly deserve a second shot, and you’re going to get one here in Dragonmont City! I’m sure you’re excited about that?”

“Um, sure,” I said, not knowing what to say. “But what does this mean for me? What does a second shot entail?”

“It’s anything that you want it to be,” replied Richie, surprising me with how broad his answer was. “Your first life wasn’t full of much happiness, and it ended far too early. For this next go-around, *you* get to choose how

you live your life. For example, what do you like to do in your spare time?"

I scratched the back of my head. "I like manga well enough, I suppose. I like to read in general. And play video games. That's all great stuff if you ask me."

"Perfect!" said Richie. "You can do that to your heart's content here! And when it comes to a job, you can do whatever you want. You don't have to work in a stuffy office working for Mr. Pencil-dick anymore."

I started to smile. "I've always wanted to help people. I don't know what I'd do with that, but just about anything would be better than making spreadsheets for Mr. Pencil-dick."

Richie snapped his fingers. "See? That's what I'm talking about. You set the terms for this second chance, and no one else. Are you ready to get started?"

Strangely, I was more than ready. I was surprised at how easily I'd digested the fact that the old me was dead. If Dragonmont City was half as great as Richie was making it sound, this was going to be a lot of fun.

"So how does this work?" I asked. "Do I need to apply for a job through the RLD? And where do I live in the meantime?"

"Slow down, Speedy, I'm getting there," joked Richie. "We have new souls coming in all the time for their second chances, though you are the first human we've seen in a while. Not that there aren't other humans here, but you won't run into very many of them. No, the first thing to do is to set you up with a temporary guardian."

"Like a parent?"

"No, more like a teacher slash landlord slash friend," explained Richie. "A guardian takes responsibility for you as a new arrival. They feed you, give you a place to sleep, and they help you find a job. Once you get acclimated to the city, you can choose to maintain your friendship with your guardian or go your own separate ways. It's truly up to you, but we want to make sure you start off on your feet."

"Makes sense to me," I said. "So how do I get a guardian?"

Richie produced a piece of paper from the back of the clipboard. “That’s already set up and ready to go. Now let’s see who the lucky person is.” Richie read the name at the top of the page, and his eyes widened considerably.

“Wow, you don’t see that happen too often!” said a surprised Richie, his tail swishing back and forth with excitement.

My brow furrowed in confusion. “See what too often? Is that good or bad?”

“It’s interesting,” said Richie. “Your guardian is none other than one of the magical creatures that *runs* Dragonmont City. One of the most fearsome and powerful fantasy creatures there is.”

My head started spinning as soon as he said that. What kind of creature was he referring to? When I thought of powerful, my brain conjured images of fire-breathing dragons or maybe even great elf warlords.

Was one of them about to be my guardian?

“Yes, you’ve been assigned to the most powerful creatures in all Dragonmont,” said Richie right before the big reveal. “Fairies.”

My heart dropped. I must not have heard that correctly. Did he really say fairies? “Say what now?”

If Richie was having fun with me, he didn’t break character. “Yes, this is very fortunate for you. The race of fairies are the most powerful and richest creatures we have. For one of them to sign up for a guardianship is most unexpected, but it could be very useful to you. I could only imagine the things you’ll accomplish with a fairy guardian.”

“Don’t get me wrong,” I started, trying to choose my words carefully. “I appreciate even getting a guardian in the first place, but a fairy? When you said powerful, I was thinking something like a dragon or something.”

Richie snorted with laughter. “A *dragon*, you say? Oh, that’s rich! That’s very good, Kevin!”

“Are dragons not powerful here?” I asked with a frown.

“Dragons are for transportation here,” said Richie. “I like to think of them as more like stuffy cabbies than anything else, but they aren’t even *close*

to being the elites. Perhaps you should think about being a comedian in this new life. You clearly have some skills!”

I didn’t know what to make of that so I didn’t say anything. I was tempted to ask why the city was named after dragons if they were so powerless, but I bit my tongue.

“Here, this is the address of your new guardian, Mrs. Pennington,” said Richie, handing me a sheet of paper. “She’ll be expecting you so don’t keep her waiting long.”

“Uh, is there anything else I need to know?” I asked. “How do I get there? Just flag down the first dragon that I see?”

“Sure, you could do that, but you probably wouldn’t have much money to pay them,” said Richie. “Her address isn’t far away. It’s only about a five minute walk, which I think will be great for you. It’ll be just long enough to immerse yourself in your new city!”

That didn’t sound like a bad thing to me at all. I was beyond curious now about Dragonmont City, especially since there were more fantasy creatures out there waiting for discovery.

The biggest question on my mind was what was I going to do now? I certainly didn’t want to blow my second chance, but I didn’t even know where to start. Richie made it sound like the possibilities were endless, and maybe he was right.

But I still needed a starting point. Maybe my guardian might be able to point me in the right direction.

I hopped off the leather table. “Well, I guess I should go find out where I’ll be staying.”

“That’s the spirit!” said Richie as he maneuvered his awkward body around to open the door. “There’s a bright new world out there for you! Go make the most of it!”

Chapter Two

I FOLLOWED Richie out into a hallway, where I heard noise almost as soon as I stepped out. It was the white noise of many voices chattering, and it only seemed to get louder as he led me down the hallway into a wide open room on the other side.

My mouth dropped open as soon as I caught sight of all the creatures inside the room. Don't get me wrong, I was more than willing to believe Richie seeing as it wasn't everyday that a freaking centaur just stepped into your life to let you know that you were starting over.

But right now? There were well over a *hundred* fantasy creatures in this room, and I didn't know where to look first.

The first thing to catch my attention were the clerks that worked here at the RLD. They occupied a row of desks that were about ten deep, and each of them were staffed by either elves or orcs by the looks of them. I noticed that the elvish women that I saw were beautiful, and I was surprised that the orcs weren't as nasty as I expected.

There was even an orc woman there who could be called beautiful too, with her black hair all done up in stylish ringlets.

There was a line of people waiting to talk to each clerk, and this was where it got really strange. I could see a pair of diminutive dwarves fighting over their place in line. I saw a dragon mother trying to keep her little dragon-kin in line (and mostly failing since they were laughing at the dwarves). I even saw a group of gnomes lined up, with each of them wearing a different color of hat.

"Oh, excuse me, sir," came the voice of a polite yet fat ogre as he entered the hallway I just came from.

"I'm so sorry," I said, stepping out of the way.

The ogre grinned and tapped my shoulder with his heavy hand. "No trouble whatsoever!"

He was gone before I could say another word, disappearing down the hall. When I turned around again, I saw that Richie waving his hand.

“You’re all set now, Kevin!” he said. “Good luck out there.”

I shook his hand and then we were all finished. I walked out the door of the building, careful not to run into any of the dragon-kin, and caught my first glimpse of Dragonmont City.

And I had to say, my first glance of the city was totally *stunning*.

I wasn’t sure what to expect when it came to a city that was full of magical fantasy creatures. I half-expected to find a bunch of medieval inns and other buildings made of wood clustered together, but Dragonmont City was the total opposite. It was a stunning metropolis of gorgeous modern steel buildings with big windows that reflected the sun’s light overhead.

Almost all of the buildings were unique. I saw several with innovative towers on every corner, looking like modern castles. I even saw one that looked like it had wings. The top of the tower reminded me of a dragon’s snout—no doubt the effect the creator was going for when they made it.

There was foliage everywhere—ranging from simple trees that lined the streets and blossomed with all kinds of fruit—to giant parks that were so large that I could scarcely make out the buildings on the other side of them.

Water was everywhere. In fact, most streets were composed of water in some form, with canals crisscrossing in every direction. The canals were set below the street level, requiring simple bridges to get across them, but it added an interesting dynamic to them, especially because it allowed more creatures into the city.

I couldn’t believe it when I saw a trio of mermaids operating a water’s-edge stall that was full of deep-ocean pearls. There was even a family of hydras making their way down the next canal, their scales glistening in the sunlight. They slipped under a bridge that was being crossed by giant trolls, their clubs resting on their shoulders as they carried bags of produce in their other hands.

“Pardon me, sir! Fresh watermelons here! Delicious limes and lemons—all fresh from the farm!”

Even more than all the creatures that I saw, the thing that surprised me the most was how they all seemed to live in harmony together. The trolls

weren’t trying to bash the elves, and the hydras weren’t trying to eat the mermaids. Dragonmont was truly a city of wonder and peace, and I couldn’t help but smile as I walked down its fantastical streets.

I even had to sample the fruit. I reached up to grab a fat, juicy peach from one of the nearby trees. I brought it to my mouth and took a bite, rolling my eyes upward as the sweetness landed on my tongue.

“That’s amazing,” I said, loving every second of it.

I might have eaten a few more peaches on my way to my new guardian’s place. I ended up loading up a good many of them into my backpack, which was the only belonging I had after I left the RLD.

By the time I arrived at the penthouse, I was feeling good and looking forward to meeting this fairy that had agreed to help me get on my feet.

The building that I arrived at looked like one of those fancy places that not only had a front desk person at all times of day but also a doorman. The doorman was another ogre, and he bowed deeply to me as he opened the door.

“Good day to you, sir,” he said as politely as he could muster.

“And good day to you too,” I said, handing him a peach.

He looked like he didn’t know what to do with it, but I was already approaching the front desk. I found a cyclops behind the desk, his one eye watching me from the moment I stepped inside.

“Can I help you with something, sir?” he asked in a humorless tone as he glared down at me.

“Yes, I’ve just arrived from the Re-Life Department,” I said. “My name is Kevin Hunt, and I’ve been assigned to Mrs. Pennington. She’s my new guardian.”

“Mrs. Pennington, you say?” asked the cyclops, his nose wrinkling in disgust. “Can I see your paperwork?”

I shrugged and gave it to him, letting him take a minute to examine it.

“This is a really nice place,” I said, looking around.

The cyclops seemed to take offense to that too. “This building contains the *nicest* penthouse apartments in the entire city.”

“Yeah, I’d have to agree,” I said. “Mrs. Pennington has a nice penthouse. That’s a mouthful, isn’t it? Mrs. Pennington’s penthouse. Say that five times fast, will you?”

“No, I refuse to,” said the humorless cyclops. “I will not do it.”

I was having fun now, and I decided to test my limits a little more. “I bet you I can.”

“You can do what, sir?”

“Say it five times fast. Mrs. Pennington’s penthouse. Mrs. Pennington’s penthouse.”

I said it three more times as a smile grew on my face. I might have stumbled on the last repetition, but I was in a good mood, and I wanted to see if I could break him out of this stoic facade.

Unfortunately, I had no such luck. The cyclops handed my paper back to me and gestured for me to follow him through the lobby. He wouldn’t be hard to keep track of in a crowd, especially seeing as he stood nearly ten feet high.

We reached a set of elevators, and the cyclops produced a key, opening the doors on one.

“Mrs. Pennington lives on the sixty-first floor,” he said. “The door will open for you when you arrive.”

“Cool, is she home?” I asked. “I can’t wait to meet her.”

He stuck his nose in the air. “I’m not privy to that information.”

I shrugged. “Suit yourself. I guess I’ll go up now.”

I was getting tired of pulling his teeth to make him talk, and I’m sure he didn’t care much for my presence anyway. I waited until the elevator doors closed, feeling the boost all the way to the sixty-first floor.

Stepping onto that floor was like stepping into the ritziest place I’ve ever been in. At one time, I had a cousin that dated a pro football player, and I thought his penthouse was pretty nuts.

Nothing compared to this place though.

The only thing I could see was gold. Gold was everywhere. These fairies must have shit gold with how prevalent it was. The walls were gold, the tiles were gold, and even the knob on the suite door was gold.

I expected the entire penthouse to be covered in gold, but from the moment the door swung open, I was somewhat relieved to see that it appeared much more natural (though not any less nice). I could see sterling-white walls, granite countertops, stainless steel everything, and even brand new leather couches in the living room. The living room was dominated by a big screen television that was larger than I was, which I had to test out by holding out both my arms to see if it was longer than my arms were wide.

It definitely was. By about an extra foot.

There was even an outdoor balcony that had a stunning view over the city, but as nice as the place was, I couldn't help but feel that it seemed bland. There weren't any decorations visible nor any family pictures. Even though I was standing in Mrs. Pennington's living room, I had not one clue what she looked like or what she liked.

I had figured out that she was a slob though. Holy crap was that place messy. There was clothing *everywhere*. I saw a stain in the carpets near the television, and the sink in the kitchen was completely full of dishes.

Mrs. Pennington was either not much for chores or she'd never hired a maid. Either way, the place was a pigsty.

"Mrs. Pennington?" I called out, stepping over a discarded bag of fast food from a place called Banshee Burgers. "Hello? Anyone home?"

I looked through every room in the penthouse only to find that she wasn't home at all. I was completely alone inside, and I had no idea when she'd be back.

At least I was able to snack on those peaches before I got here.

I didn't have much in the way of belongings besides the clothes on my back, so I decided to sit on her couch to wait her out. Maybe I would even

check out the channels on that big screen television. I grabbed a cozy spot on the leather and started to grab the controller.

“Ew shit, what’s that?” I said, feeling my fingers get wet instantly once they touched the controller. I held them up to the light only to see something red and chunky. I brought them to my nose and sniffed.

“That smells like marinara sauce,” I said. I looked around and figured out where it came from after seeing another discarded container of spaghetti and meatballs on the floor. I could also see that the container had leaked, creating a red spot on the carpet in the living room.

“Mrs. Pennington, we’re going to have to talk about the state of your penthouse,” I grumbled as I tried to look for something to clean my fingers with.

I went to the kitchen and started searching through the cabinets. Most of them were either bare or filled with pots and pans that hadn’t been used in ages as evident by the layer of dust on them.

It took me a few minutes, but I finally found one cabinet that had some cleaning supplies. I used a spare rag to wipe my fingers before grabbing the carpet cleaner and moving back to the take-out box. I tossed it in the trash before trying to get that red spot out of the carpet.

It took me a few sprays but I was able to get most of it out, at least enough that it would fool anyone who wasn’t looking for it.

Now that I had one cleaning under my belt, I felt like I should keep going. There was no shortage of things that needed cleaning, and honestly, I thought it was a small way to say thank you to Mrs. Pennington for agreeing to be my guardian.

So I got to work. All the take-out boxes and bags were thrown in the trash. Her clothing was picked up off the ground, which turned out to be the easiest part. Her clothing was less than half the size of mine, and I guessed that fairies were small creatures in Dragonmont City as they were in the stories back on Earth.

I even cleaned off the coffee table and spritzed the windows, making them shine for probably the first time in ages. When the living room looked like it was spotless, I wiped the sweat off my brow and smiled.

“There’s nothing like seeing a job well done,” I said to myself. “What a beautiful sight.”

I had a feeling the penthouse would agree with me if it could talk. I knew Mrs. Pennington was liable to be pleased too, and so I moved onto the kitchen, planning to take care of the dishes.

No sooner had I started than I heard the sounds of footsteps out in the hall. I figured this was finally Mrs. Pennington coming home, and I dried my hands and prepared to make a good first impression on her.

When the front door opened, I didn’t see the diminutive Mrs. Pennington.

Chapter Three

No, what I saw was a completely *gorgeous* goblin girl wearing a traditional French maid's outfit.

I don't think I'd ever been that speechless before in my life. All of my senses were on overload as I took in this stunning woman in front of me. The most curious thing about her was the fact that she was a goblin.

I'd always expected goblins to be short little green creatures with hooked noses and sharp teeth but she was anything but. Okay, she was a little on the short side, maybe around five feet tall if I had to guess. And she was definitely green, but she was far from ugly.

The most striking thing about her were those wonderfully green eyes. They were a shade deeper than the rest of her skin, but I noticed how full they were, like they were sucking me in deeper. She had lovely dark hair that just had the right amount of shine to it, as well as pointy ears that stuck out on either side in an adorable way.

Her lips were red and slightly pouty, which was a great look for her. She was wearing a small white necklace that hung just low enough to tease the top of her breasts (and enough to catch my attention).

She had a tiny frame, but she wasn't what I would consider a stick either. No, her hips flared out from her tiny stomach before tucking into a pair of lace pantyhose.

For her clothing, well, I'd seen some maid Halloween costumes that had left more to the imagination. She was wearing thin straps over her shoulders, coming down low toward the rest of the maid outfit, which was a mix of black fabric with white, ruffled edges. Her cleavage was absolutely spectacular—all that mileage of unblemished fresh neatly contained within a bra that should win an award for how much support it offered her.

She was completely stunning, and all I wanted to do was figure out who she was and how I could spend more time with her. The more primal part of my brain was screaming for me to ravish her, and that thought was equally as tempting.

It wasn't just the raw sexual attraction either. I wanted to hold her but in a loving kind of way. I wanted to kiss those pouty red lips while the song "Kiss Me" played in the background.

Needless to say, I was hooked right away, and the only thing that made this just a tiny bit difficult was the fact that she did *not* look happy to see me.

She gripped her duster like she was about to smack me with it. "What are you doing here?"

In hindsight, it was a fair question. Unfortunately, me being so tongue-tied by her looks had me mimicking the same thing back to her.

"W-what are you doing here?" I said, instantly regretting how stupid that sounded.

She gave me a weird look. "I work here. For Mrs. Pennington. I'm her maid." She looked around the house. "Or at least I was."

"Now that makes a lot of sense!" I said, looking around. "Because this place looked like a dump when I got here."

Her expression hardened. "You did this? *You* cleaned her apartment?"

"Well, yeah, but I—"

Before I could finish my statement, we both jumped as the door to the penthouse came crashing open again. This time, the new arrival wasn't some big ogre or troll capable of creating such a noise, but rather a very diminutive fairy who flapped into the penthouse while talking on a phone.

Judging by her fancy clothing and air of sophistication, I think I'd finally found Mrs. Pennington.

Mrs. Pennington took one look at me and the goblin girl and sighed. "Trish, let me call you back."

She tossed the phone on the counter before planting her hands on her hips. Even for a fairy, she managed to look menacing. "What in the seven graces is going on here?"

There was a perfectly reasonable explanation for all of this, but I'd never been very good at introductions. So I stammered out something that

sounded reasonable to my ears, but in hindsight probably wasn't the best way to start.

"Hi, I'm Kevin," I said, giving Mrs. Pennington a wave.

She glanced at me before rebounding on the girl. "Paulina, what is going on here? Is this your boyfriend?"

Paulina shook her head while she held her hands behind her back. I noticed it just so happened to make her cleavage pop just a little bit more in that maid outfit.

"No, I just found him here," said Paulina. "I'm not sure who he is. Or why he's cleaned your penthouse."

"You're my guardian," I blurted out. "I just arrived from the Re-Life Department. They told me you signed on to help me acclimate to the city?"

I should have led with that because I could see the light bulb go off in Mrs. Pennington's head.

Her wings flapped excitedly. "Oh, so you're the boy that will be my ward for the next few weeks, fabulous!"

I should have been happy that she made the connection, but there was something about her tone that disturbed me. Maybe it was the way she said ward, but to my ears, it sounded like she should have said slave.

That probably would have been more accurate.

Mrs. Pennington flew into the living room, dropping a shopping bag on the floor in the process. I could see now why things got so messy here. I bent over to pick it up, setting it on a chair. For a brief moment, I made eye contact with Paulina, who was now scowling at me.

"This is just wonderful," said Mrs. Pennington, clapping her hands together. "And you did all of this? You cleaned my apartment since you've been here?"

I gave Paulina a guilty look before facing Mrs. Pennington. "That's right. When I got here, I didn't know how long it would be until you arrived. I noticed the apartment wasn't in the . . . best shape."

“That’s because I only come three days a week,” added Paulina. “I haven’t been here the last two days.”

I coughed awkwardly. “It got that dirty in just three days?”

Paulina’s eyes went wide and she nodded. I had to bite my tongue from laughing, but if Mrs. Pennington noticed, she didn’t say a word.

“Why, everything is just positively spotless!” she said excitedly. “I don’t even see a trace of dust! In fact, the only place that doesn’t look clean is the kitchen.”

“I’d only just started in there when I met Paulina,” I said honestly.

“Well, I see my investment in this guardianship has already paid dividends,” said Mrs. Pennington, as she gave me a leering grin that made me profoundly uncomfortable. “And I especially enjoy that I don’t need to pay you to do it.”

I wasn’t liking where this was going one bit, and I especially didn’t like how Mrs. Pennington now rebounded on Paulina. She reached into her coat and produced one copper-colored coin, depositing it into Paulina’s hand.

“Paulina, your services are no longer required,” said a very smug Mrs. Pennington.

“No!”

Mrs. Pennington was surprised when we both said the word at the same time. She flew backward as I marched over to stand next to Paulina. Even Paulina gave me a weird look before facing Mrs. Pennington again.

“Mrs. Pennington, I think this has all just been a big misunderstanding,” she said. “I didn’t know he was your ward or whatever, but I can still be your maid. The dishes still need to be done and who knows if your bedroom has been touched yet—”

“My dear girl,” interrupted Mrs. Pennington, giving Paulina an arrogant expression. “Why would I continue to pay for formal maid service when I have live-in help? Especially one that’s free?”

“I’m not going to touch another thing,” I said, planting my hands on my hips defiantly. “Paulina deserves to keep her job.”

Mrs. Pennington glared at me. “We’ll discuss this later. For now, it would be a good decision on your part to keep your mouth shut.”

“Mrs. Pennington, please,” pleaded Paulina. “I really need to keep you as a client. My business isn’t doing very well, and if I lose another account, I’m afraid that we’re going to go through some tough times—”

“No matter, I’m sure that someone can help you at the welfare office,” said Mrs. Pennington with a dismissive wave of her hand. “I’ll even give you a review if it helps you get a new job, but the discussion is over, Paulina. You can go now.”

Paulina opened her mouth one more time to speak, but Mrs. Pennington shushed her before she could get any words out. At that point, the goblin maid knew when she was defeated. Her shoulders slumped forward, and she let out a deep sigh.

“I guess I’ll just be going then,” she said, approaching the door.

I hated everything about what I’d just witnessed. The whole thing was disgusting to me, and not just because I was attracted to Paulina. It was obvious that Paulina was just trying to run her own business, but Mrs. Pennington seemed to be too blinded by the idea of what I could do for free.

At that moment, I wished I’d never touched a thing in her apartment. I should have sat on that couch with my hand covered in marinara sauce, waiting for Mrs. Pennington to arrive home. At least then Paulina would still have a job.

Try as I might, I couldn’t help but blame myself for what happened. Mrs. Pennington might have been the one to pull the trigger, but I was the one that loaded the gun and handed it to her.

What was even worse was to see that Mrs. Pennington had not the slightest ounce of remorse on her face. As soon as the door was closed, she flew next to me grinning like a Cheshire cat.

“Okay, Kelvin, I have so many tasks that I need you to do for me in the next few days.”

“Actually, it’s Kevin.”

“First, I need you to finish those dishes,” continued Mrs. Pennington, not even hearing me. “And Kelvin, make sure they’re spotless. The dishwasher doesn’t get all the spots off so you’ll have to hand-clean them. After that, I want you to go through my wardrobe and organize it completely by size, shape, and color. Put aside any clothing that is marked as being a size two or lower. I’ve put on a little weight lately and none of them fit anymore.”

I stopped her right there by waving my hands. “Mrs. Pennington, if this guardianship is going to work, you really need to stop treating me like your hired help. I think it would be wise to hire Paulina back right now.”

Mrs. Pennington smirked at me and shook her head. “That’s definitely not going to happen. Listen, Paulina is a very nice girl, but you’ll do the work for free. A simple understanding of business dictates that I fire her.”

I crossed my arms in front of my chest defiantly. “I’m most certainly not doing anything for you. Not for free. No way, no how. That’s Paulina’s job, and you need to hire her back.”

I thought my brave stance might be enough to shake Mrs. Pennington from her arrogant notions, but I wasn’t so lucky. The coldhearted patrician shook her fist at me.

“You will do what I tell you to do if you want to live here with me!” she thundered. “You do not dictate terms to me. Know your place, Kelvin!”

“It’s fucking *Kevin*,” I said, seething. “And if that’s how you’re going to act, then I’m not going to permit you to be my guardian.”

Okay, I was kind of bluffing at that point. I still needed a place to stay, and I definitely didn’t want to sleep out on the streets on my first night. But I needed her to understand that what she did was not okay, and I wasn’t going to stand for it.

What I didn’t count on was Mrs. Pennington’s reaction to being told no. I knew that the elite and powerful usually got what they wanted, but just by having an opinion that wasn’t hers, I wasn’t prepared for the explosion that followed.

“You will not permit me?” she raged. “You have no idea who you’re dealing with! My uncle sits on the city council, and you think you can dictate terms to *me*?”

I threw my hands up, making for the bag containing my meager possessions. “Fine, I’m leaving then. Good luck with your life.”

I expected more of a blow-up, but it seemed that calling her bluff actually worked. Mrs. Pennington started to sputter as I approached the door.

“Wait, wait, wait!” she said, flying toward me quickly. “You can’t go. What will my friends say if I lose my guardian on the first day?”

“Tell them you lost it because you’re a raging bitch without a shred of decency in you,” I said, shrugging my shoulders indifferently. “Believe me, I’m sure they’ll understand.”

I closed the door in her face after that, finding myself in the gilded hallway. It felt good to stand up to Mrs. Pennington after the way she treated Paulina, but I realized I knew no one in the city and had nowhere to go.

In fact, the only other person I knew probably never wanted to see me again.

Paulina.

That’s when I had an idea. An idea that hit me like a backpack full of peaches.

Chapter Four

I raced onto the elevator, smashing the button a dozen times until the door closed and it started to descend toward the lobby. I hoped I wasn't too late, but I had no idea how quickly goblin girls moved. For a brief moment, I pictured Paulina strutting her stuff along the sidewalk with the wind blowing the ruffles on her maid outfit, but I had to cut it out right away.

Mostly because I liked the idea a little too much.

Once the elevator dinged upon arrival in the lobby, I shot out of there quickly, flying past the humorless front desk cyclops before finding myself on the street.

I craned my head left and right, trying to find the telltale signs of green, black, and white that I was looking for. I thought I saw a hint of those colors to my right, so I took off on a sprint, weaving through two elvish old ladies and even a group of humans who barely noticed my presence.

Finally, I recognized her. She wasn't that far away, and I ran as fast as I could until I closed the distance.

"Hey, Paulina, wait up please!" I said, wheezing once I caught up to her.

She turned around quickly, seemingly surprised at my sudden reappearance. I counted myself fortunate that she didn't look at me with disdain after what happened.

"What are you doing here?" she asked quietly.

I had the worst case of word vomit there ever was as five different things tried to escape all at once.

"She's-a-bitch-you-don't-deserve-that-I'm-sorry," I motored through quickly.

Paulina actually smiled, even though she still seemed heavily confused. "Can you try that again? Just slower this time?"

I took a deep breath. "Yes, sorry. That lady back there is a bitch. And I'm sorry about that whole thing."

The smile melted off her face as she was reminded about her firing. “Yeah, she really is. I’ve been working for Mrs. Pennington for six months now. You can say that she’s never been that pleasant.”

“I can definitely see that. I’m not even sure why she submitted to be my guardian in the first place.”

Paulina raised an eyebrow. “Probably for the tax write-off. That’s usually how she works. She doesn’t do anything out of the goodness of her heart. I think there’s just a black space where her heart used to be.”

“Like a black hole that sucks in emotions and men whole,” I said. “Just not take-out boxes unfortunately.”

Paulina giggled. “No, unfortunately not.”

I couldn’t help but be infatuated with that smile. Paulina was just that pretty, especially right now as she was catching the afternoon sun.

“So you’re new here then?” she said. “RLD?”

“Just landed in the city today,” I replied. “Still a Dragonmont virgin if you will.”

“Well, welcome,” she said, before a smile grew on her face. “Trying to get anyone else fired today?”

I winced. “No, I’m sorry, it was just an accident—”

She put her hand on my arm. “No, I’m just teasing you. Sorry if that was too mean. Don’t get me wrong, I’m feeling a little frustrated right now, but I know it’s not your fault. You were just trying to be helpful.”

“If I had any idea, I would have made more of a mess just so you had something extra to clean up,” I joked, which made Paulina laugh harder.

“No thanks, I already have several clients like that. I don’t need any more of them making bigger messes just so I have something to do.”

“Okay, well at the very least, I would have left everything as I found it,” I said.

“It just sucks, you know?” she said, playing with the ruffles on her dress. “Mrs. Pennington might have been difficult, but she was at least a reliable client. And she paid on time. She won’t be easily replaced, and I’m having

a hard time getting new customers as it is. You wouldn't think so, but maid service in this city can be very cutthroat."

"Tell me about it?" I asked. "I'm a good listener. If you need to vent, you can talk to me."

Paulina gave me a pained smile. "I really need to get back. I'm going to need to shuffle a few things around to stay in business, I think."

That statement hit me right in the stomach like a sucker punch. I was already feeling bad about her losing the client, but now that I was picking up that her entire business was in trouble, I felt lower than stepped-on troll poop.

"It was still nice to meet you though," said Paulina, holding out her hand. "Good luck with your new life. You seem like a nice person, so I'm sure you'll do just fine."

I squeezed her hand, marveling at her softness and warmth. I felt like there was a mouthful of cotton in my mouth, mostly because I didn't know what else to say. I couldn't let this end like this though.

A nice person wouldn't ruin someone else's business. At least not without trying to fix it.

Paulina had just started to walk away when I dashed ahead again.

"I want to help you."

She paused in her tracks and turned her attention back to me. I could see the wheels in motion in her head, and I wondered just what she was thinking.

Probably that I'd lost my marbles.

"Help me how?" she asked, cocking her head to one side to expose the delicate green skin of her neck.

"With the business," I said. "Your business. I can't cost you a client and just let it go. Let me help you? Let me find someone to replace Mrs. Pennington. It's the right thing to do."

She brought a finger up to her lips and started to tap on them. Next to us, a family of orcs went walking by, muttering polite excuse-mes before

wondering a bit too loud why we were taking up so much room on the sidewalk.

I found a bench and quickly gestured for her to follow me. She did, and we sat down together on it.

“I really want to help you,” I said. “And I’m sure that I can find you an even better client than Mrs. Pennington. I’ll go knock on the door of every fairy family in Dragonmont. I’ll talk to every man and woman I find.”

Paulina giggled. “Fairies are only women.”

“Regardless, I’ll talk to every fairy woman I find,” I said before the thought had a chance to process. “There are no male fairies?”

“Not even close,” said Paulina, still laughing. “I could tell you about how they mate, but you’d probably find the story unsavory.”

“Yeah, probably,” I said. “But I still want to help.”

“So what do you get out of it?”

It was a good question, but not one I had an answer for. I shrugged.

“I get to help someone who got a crappy roll of the dice,” I said. “And maybe you might be able to help me out a little?”

Her expression hardened. “With what?”

I scratched the back of my head. “I can’t exactly go back to Mrs. Pennington. Not after what I called her. I was pretty upset at what I’d witnessed, and I used a few words that are *really* hard to take back.”

“You called her a bitch to her face, didn’t you?” asked Paulina.

“Yeah, I kinda did.”

She giggled. “I’ve wanted to do that for months. Did it feel as good as I thought it would?”

“It felt great up until the point I realized that I have no place to stay tonight,” I said. “She might be a bitch, but she’s still my guardian. *Was* my guardian. I’m a little desperate right now.”

“Oh, I see,” said Paulina. “So in exchange for helping me replace the client that you lost me, you’re hoping that I would take on your

guardianship so that you have a place to stay tonight. Is that the long and short of it?”

I winced. “It sounded a lot different in my head. Much nicer.”

She laughed. “I have a habit of calling things like I see them. If we become friends, you’ll want to know that about me.”

“If?” I repeated. “Because I could really use a friend right now. And by the looks of it, so could you.”

I wasn’t trying to offend her with that statement, but it was merely an observation that I had while talking with her. Paulina seemed to carry too much stress on her shoulders, and despite knowing her for less than an hour, I wanted to make as much of it go away as I possibly could.

I wanted to see that gorgeous smile of hers much more often.

“Okay,” said Paulina finally, her expression staying neutral.

“Okay what?” I asked. “Okay I’ve lost my mind or okay I can stay with you?”

“Just okay,” said Paulina, giggling again. “I’m not opposed to the idea, but the final decision doesn’t just rest with me. You need to get someone else’s approval too.”

“Who would that be?”

Paulina stood up. “Come on. I’ll take you to meet her.”

It was only about a five minute walk from where we were to the small duplex that Paulina lived in. I was surprised how quickly the high-rises melted away only to be replaced by smaller apartments and townhouses the further we got from the city’s center.

I was also mostly surprised at how accepting Paulina had been. I expected her to hold a grudge for longer than she did, but it wasn’t long until we were shooting questions back and forth.

“So how long have you lived in Dragonmont City?” I asked.

“My entire life,” answered Paulina. “Most of us are born here. Only a rare few get reborn like yourself. But my parents lived in the house we’re going to, and they gave it to me once they passed away.”

“Sorry to hear that,” I said. “You seem kinda young to have both of your parents gone.”

“It’s okay,” said Paulina before she shot me a sideways glance. “But how old do you think I am?”

“I’ve learned to never answer that question.”

“Oh, come on,” she said, swatting my elbow playfully. “Seriously, how old do you think I am?”

“Old enough to take my breath away.”

Paulina stopped in her tracks at the same time I realized that I didn’t say that in my head. I turned to face her and turned about as red as a gnome’s hat.

“And I can’t believe I just said that out loud,” I said quietly.

Paulina giggled. “It was still a good answer. As you can imagine, I don’t hear stuff like that very often.”

“Haha, very funny,” I said, rolling my eyes.

Paulina looked confused. “I wasn’t joking?”

“Wait a second. Are you trying to tell me that no one has told you’re pretty before? Seriously?”

Paulina’s eyes rolled around her head. “Um, no?”

“This is a really weird city.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Because it just is.”

“I’m sorry to burst your bubble, but goblins aren’t exactly very high on the food chain, you know,” she said. “Most creatures would greatly prefer an elf. Or maybe even a dryad.”

“Well, it sounds like most creatures are stupid so there you go,” I said.

She smiled at me—one that was full of warmth and made my heart beat more rapidly in my chest. “You know, maybe I’m not so mad at you anymore. I mean, I’m still upset about losing the client, but the way I’m looking at it now, it wasn’t exactly the worst trade-off.”

I started to laugh. “That almost sounds like a compliment. Almost!”

“I’m not going to make it that easy on you. Besides, you haven’t met my roommate yet.”

We kept walking until we stopped at Paulina’s duplex. From the outside, it didn’t look like much. It looked to be three stories, but it was definitely more narrow than it was wide. There was a wooden gate that Paulina had to unlatch to allow entry to the walkway that led to the door. The front yard was practically nonexistent, with only a tiny strip of grass before we reached the door.

Once we stepped up to it, I could faintly hear the sound of music inside. As soon as Paulina opened the door, that music turned up full-blast to a song that I was very familiar with.

“Whoooooaaa we’re halfway thereeeee! Whoaaaa oh, livin’ on a prayerrrrr!”

It was a distinctly feminine voice that was doing the singing, and it was one that could have definitely used some work. I’m not saying that she was terrible, but I don’t think it was a coincidence that there were a few cats waiting outside the window.

“You guys get Bon Jovi here?” I asked surprisingly.

“Oh yes, we get all the latest hit songs from Earth,” confirmed Paulina.

I was just about to ask what her definition of “latest” was when Paulina turned the music all the way down.

“Hey, what the hell happened to my music!” shouted the female voice, who’d just so recently been singing. I heard stomping until I was faced with yet another goblin girl in front of me.

And this one was every bit as beautiful as Paulina. Like her roommate, this girl was still dressed in her maid outfit, and she filled it out just as well as Paulina did with one noticeable exception.

Her boobs were incredibly large, straining that fabric to its very limits.

It was hard not to stare. It was just as hard not to look away when I took in her full cherry-red lips and dark-purple hair.

Were all goblin girls such bombshells? And how could I be the only person that thought so?

The purple-haired girl looked confused as soon as she looked at Paulina. Her glance bounced off me and then back to Paulina before she finally spoke.

“You’re back so early, Polly. What happened? And who is this?”

Paulina shook her head. “It hasn’t been a great day, Kennedi. I have some bad news.”

Kennedi rolled up her sleeves on her maid outfit. “Did he knock you up? Want me to knock him out?”

She didn’t wait for a response before she took a menacing step closer to me, shaking her fist. “No one knocks up my best friend!”

I put my hands up suddenly and so did Paulina. “No, no, no! Why is that the first thing you think of?”

Kennedi smiled. “You came back with a human man. Is it really that surprising?”

“What’s so special about human men?” I whispered to Paulina.

“Later!” she hissed at me.

Paulina turned her attention back to her friend. “So the bad news is that we lost Mrs. Pennington today. Rather, *I* lost Mrs. Pennington.”

Kennedi’s eyes bounced off me momentarily. “Why do I get the impression there’s more to this story?”

Paulina opened her mouth to speak but no words came out. She looked at me helplessly. At that point, I realized she didn’t want to say anything that would put our introduction in a bad light, so I decided to help her out.

“It was all a big misunderstanding,” I said. “By the way, I’m Kevin. I just got reborn here today.”

“My name’s Kennedi, and I like video games,” she said nonchalantly.

I was confused for a second until she shrugged. “What? I thought we were doing little fun facts after we introduced ourselves? Were we not?”

“That’s . . . a great idea,” I said, trying to recover.

Kennedi smiled. “Isn’t it though? I have a lot of great ideas.”

“Okay, Kennedi, focus,” said Paulina, waving her hand. “Listen, Mrs. Pennington was a big misunderstanding. She thought Kevin could do the work for her for free since she signed up to be his guardian. That’s why she canned us.”

“And I told her that was definitely not going to happen after the way she treated Paulina,” I added.

“So that’s how Kevin came into the picture,” said Paulina. “He graciously offered to help us find a replacement for Mrs. Pennington.”

“And in return he wanted what?” asked Kennedi, not missing a beat.

Paulina blushed, which made her turn a darker shade of green. “That I take over his guardianship.”

I expected a hard battle at that point. My first impression of Kennedi was that she was the wary type, not easily accepting of people.

That’s why I was beyond shocked when Kennedi nodded and grinned at me. “Sounds fine to me. Welcome to our duplex!”

“Really?” I said, still shocked. “Is it that easy?”

I felt her eyes roam all over my body. “Well, you are a human man. And that helps your cause dramatically.”

“Okay, so what’s so special about human men?” I asked. “Seriously?”

“Goblin girls love human men,” said Kennedi, saying it so succinctly like it was an indisputable fact she just read from an encyclopedia. She then leaned against Paulina and elbowed her in the side. “And he’s really cute. *Really* cute, Paulina.”

“Kennedi, behave yourself,” said Paulina, looking embarrassed.

“I am behaving,” said Kennedi sweetly before turning to address me. “Can I help you figure out where you’ll be sleeping tonight? Spoiler alert—it’s my room.”

She gave me a lecherous grin that sent blood flowing south quickly. I was very tempted to take her up on the offer when Paulina smacked her arm.

“Kennedi! He’s a guest and he’s only just arrived. Keep it in your pants!”

“Fine,” pouted Kennedi, crossing her arms under her heavy breasts, which only seemed to catch my attention further. “Should we give him the tour at least? If he’s going to be staying?”

“I’d hoped to get your approval that he would be staying even for the night,” said Paulina. “But from the sounds of it, you’re ready for him to move in.”

Kennedi grinned, leaving no doubt about her opinion. Especially as she sized me up again, giving me elevator eyes like I was a snack she was about to devour.

“So let’s give him the tour then,” said Paulina.

Kennedi jumped with excitement and reached over to grab my hand, yanking me further into the house. “You’re going to just love it here!”

I chuckled. “It would definitely appear that way.”

Chapter Five

Kennedi led me from the entry hall toward the back of the building, where there were doors on either side. The first door she took me into was a bedroom, and it was very obvious whose room it was just from the first glance.

“This humble abode is mine,” said Kennedi elegantly, raising her hand to gesture at her bed.

I don’t know if I would use humble to describe her room. It definitely had that lived-in appeal to it. The covers were draped haphazardly over the bed, and there was clothing on the floor. It wasn’t the bedroom I expected to see of someone who made their living as a maid, but then again, Kennedi didn’t seem to fit the typical mold either.

What was most interesting about the room was the gaming station on the opposite wall. It was set into a large entertainment center, and I could see most major consoles with their own shelves, going back at least thirty years. In fact, there were only a few major consoles missing from the bunch.

“You have an original Nintendo?” I asked, gawking at it. “I haven’t seen one of those in years.”

“Psh, yeah!” said Kennedi proudly. “I even have an old Atari. If you can’t find what you’re looking for here, you don’t know squat about gaming.”

I could see that the console that was currently hooked up was a Nintendo 64. One of my favorite games of all time was in the main slot.

“*Mario Kart*? Oh, we have to play that sometime!”

Kennedi grinned. “You’re so on, but I really hope you have some tissues in that bag of yours.”

“Tissues?” I asked confusingly.

She put her finger against my chest. “Yeah for when I spank you so bad that you start to cry.”

“Kennedi takes her gaming very seriously,” said Paulina. “She’s definitely going to kick your butt.”

“Do you play too?” I asked Paulina.

Paulina made a face and shook her head. “No, not really my thing.”

“I’ve offered to teach her, but she keeps turning me down,” added Kennedi.

“It can be really fun,” I said. “Especially when you keep adding people. Two is fun but three can be even more fun.”

“Just like another activity I know,” said Kennedi, wiggling her eyebrows.

Paulina blushed in embarrassment. “Sorry about her. She’s not usually so . . .”

“Oversexed?” I suggested.

“Crude,” finished Paulina.

“I’m a go-getter type of girl,” said Kennedi, fluttering her eyelashes at me. “Or maybe go-get-him is a better way to put it.”

Paulina giggled. “Obviously.”

After seeing Kennedi’s room, we moved down the hall until we reached Paulina’s room. Even though she was the only other occupant of the house, Paulina’s room seemed to be a very unique representation of her.

It was almost too clean. Everything was neat and orderly, even the pictures on the wall were completely level, not tilted like the posters in Kennedi’s room. There was a bookshelf in the corner that was neatly organized by height, and there wasn’t anything out in the room that didn’t need to be.

The most interesting part occupied the far wall, just like in Kennedi’s room. This was Paulina’s office judging by the looks of it, with a large L-shaped desk and a huge computer monitor occupying most of it. There were a few cabinets behind it and a pile of fliers sitting on the edge of one. I picked up the flier just to see what it said.

It showed a stylized picture of a dazzling apartment that glimmered because it was so clean. Under the apartment was the business name,

Goblin Girl Maid Service, as well as a phone number and email address on how to reach them.

“I like the flier,” I said. “And your business name is very clear and to the point.”

Kennedi beamed with a smile. “I thought of the name. It’s a lot better than the old name we used. And much more to the point!”

“You also wanted to have pictures of us on the flier too,” said Paulina. “Wearing our maid outfits and in provocative poses.”

“Of course, I did,” defended Kennedi. “Sex sells.”

“Our clients are all women,” said Paulina, laughing.

“They are?” I asked. “Why’s that? Because of the fairy thing?”

Paulina nodded. “Fairies are our biggest market by far, and they’re all women as you now know.”

Kennedi leaned in closer. “I still have a bunch of fliers I made up with me on the cover. Remind me to show you later.”

I gulped as I caught a bird’s eye view of her cleavage. Those beautiful green mountains looked so snug in her outfit that I was losing my ability to think straight.

Thankfully, the tour kept going before I could embarrass myself. We went to the living room next, where I could see a big screen television as well as a set of loudspeakers. Kennedi hopped away to turn the music back on, and there was no time at all before I could hear an old pop song start booming through the speakers. Of course, Kennedi started singing along right away.

“Oh, girls, they wanna have funnnnnn!” she sang, dancing around the living room.

While Kennedi danced, I glanced over at Paulina. “So I heard you mention that you get all the ‘latest’ music from Earth. Is this another example of a latest song for you?”

Paulina gave me a weird look. “Well, kinda yeah. This song has been out for a few years but it’s still relatively newer.”

I couldn’t stop laughing. “Where I’m from, this song is nearly forty years old.”

“What?” she asked. “How can that be?”

“I have no idea. But I’ve known this song for my entire life. Same with the one Kennedi was singing earlier. It appears your songs here are limited to the 80s and nothing newer than that.”

Paulina’s brow wrinkled in confusion. “What’s the 80s?”

“Hair metal and brightly-colored jackets,” I said. “Other than that, you’re not missing much.”

She didn’t look satisfied by that answer, but Kennedi turned the music down once she finished the song. “We also have a great selection of movies too,” she said, turning on the television. I was amazed as I saw a very familiar movie start to play.

“I’ll never let go, Jack. I promise, I’ll never let go.”

“Okay, so hold on a second,” I said, pointing at the television. “You only have 80s music but for some reason you have *Titanic* as a movie? That came out in ‘97. Is this an old movie for you or was this just released?”

Kennedi waved her hand. “No way, this movie has been out for more than twenty years.”

I started to rub my eyes with my fingers. “This doesn’t make any sense. You have modern movies, but your music is stuck forty years in the past.”

Paulina shrugged. “This is Dragonmont City, Kevin. Everything works a little differently here.”

There was no doubt about that. Any hope of me understanding how this place worked sank as quickly as Leo did into the frozen waters of the Atlantic. Ultimately, I shrugged though, believing that I would figure it out with time.

“We haven’t even shown him the best part of the house yet,” said Kennedi.

“What’s the best part?” I asked.

“The roof,” she said, grinning.

They led me up to the roof, where I almost expected to find a dusty antic. Instead, the door opened up to a metal staircase on the outside of the building, which led to an amazing rooftop terrace.

“Wow, look at this,” I muttered as I took it all in.

The first thing I noticed was the seating. There were two couches that faced each other, separated by a firepit that occupied the middle. Over the couches was an open-aired pavilion that kept the rain out but still offered fresh air.

On the other side of the couches was an outdoor grill and minibar area, perfect for entertaining. It overlooked a good portion of the city, offering a stunning view of downtown just a short distance away.

But that wasn’t the best part, which was hiding in one of the corners.

“You have a hot tub?” I asked excitedly as I made my way over to it.

Paulina winced. “Yes and no.”

I wasn’t sure what she meant until I unclipped the sides and opened it up. My heart sank once I saw what was inside.

This thing hadn’t been used in years. The first thing that hit me was the smell—strong enough to make me want to faint. It was the smell of stagnant water, of which there was about three feet of at the very bottom of the tub. That smell was mixed with a distinct chemical smell that was overpowering and downright unpleasant.

I could tell there was no power to it, since none of the buttons allowed it to be turned on. I wondered if the motor was fried, not like it mattered now with the state of the water. Deep stains marked the walls, the kind of grime that discolored the outer shell.

“Well, that’s definitely a bummer,” I said, looking at the tub.

“We don’t know how to use it,” said Paulina sheepishly.

“Yeah, this place used to belong to Paulina’s parents,” added Kennedi. “Her dad took care of the tub but when he died, we found it hard to keep it going. We could never keep the water just right, and then eventually the tub just stopped working.”

“It’s been unused ever since,” finished Paulina.

“This would be an incredible addition to the terrace,” I said. “Can you just imagine sitting up here looking out on the city after a long day? Soaking in the tub? It would be wonderful.”

“It does sound nice,” said Paulina. “But I don’t know if it will ever run again. And we certainly can’t afford a new one.”

“Hmm,” I said, examining the tub. “Maybe I can help with this?”

Both goblins perked up instantly. “Really?” asked Kennedi. “You think you can fix it?”

“It can’t be that hard,” I said. “Besides, I’ve taken care of them before. I used to do it as a summer job when I was trying to pay my way through college so I know something about them. Let me work on this, and we’ll see if I can get it running again.”

I wasn’t sure if I could get it running. If it had been sitting for years, there was no telling what kind of state the internal components might be. Tubs could be money pits if you didn’t take care of them properly, and I’d seen more than my fair share of tubs go to waste because some rich widow thought that adding chemicals wasn’t entirely necessary.

After checking out the rooftop terrace, the girls led me back downstairs until we came to the last bedroom. It was as clean as Paulina’s, and the only things I could see were a bed, a desk, and a small dresser next to the window.

“This can be your room,” said Paulina. “If you’re going to stay with us, you should have a room of your own.”

“Unless he wants to permanently stay in my room,” said Kennedi with a flirtatious grin.

Paulina poked her in the side. “He should have his own space. I’m sure that having his own bed would be very welcome right now.”

Paulina was right in a way, but I had to admit the idea of sharing one with Kennedi or Paulina was very tempting. Judging by the look on Kennedi’s face, I figured I wouldn’t be spending too many nights alone in my bed, especially if she had anything to say about it.

I set my bag down on my bed when I heard the sounds of someone's phone going off. It was Kennedi's judging by the way she dug into her cleavage for the phone, sighing when she saw who was calling.

"Hold on in a second," she said in disgust as she left the room, arguing almost immediately once she picked up the phone.

Once she was gone, it left just Paulina and I. It was hard to tell exactly what she was thinking. I liked Paulina, not just because I thought she was breathtakingly gorgeous but because she seemed like a good and honest person just trying to make it in the world on her own two feet.

"Well, what do you think so far?" she asked nervously. "Do you like our place?"

"Honestly, it's great," I answered. "And I would take this place any day over Mrs. Pennington's stuffy penthouse."

Paulina giggled. "I don't know about that. Her penthouse is kind of nice once it's all cleaned up."

"Still, there's no charm to it," I said. "This duplex has charm. And it has you and Kennedi inside, which is enough for me."

A genuine smile appeared on her face. I loved the way it looked on her, but I only wished it lasted for longer than it did.

"You can stay here as long as it takes to get you on your feet," she said. "I'd love your help in replacing Mrs. Pennington, but I know the guardian program isn't forever. I imagine that you'll want your new place soon enough, right?"

Actually, no, I really didn't. I'd known both of them for less than a day, but the thought of leaving Paulina and Kennedi was a gut-wrenching one.

"I'm not in a hurry," I said quickly. "But you won't have to kick me out. I'm definitely committed to helping you but when you need me to go, I can go."

It was a halfway answer to a halfway question, and I could tell it made Paulina nervous. I realized just how guarded she was, especially when compared to the much more open Kennedi. Normally that would make me

tread lightly around a person, but with Paulina, I wanted to find out why she was so guarded so I could help bring those walls down.

“No, stay as long as you like,” she said quickly. “I’m grateful for any help you can bring us. I just don’t know if we’ll be worth your time.”

I could read between the lines of that statement. It wasn’t that she was doubting me. She was doubting herself and her business.

At that moment, I realized that Paulina was expecting the business to fail. And more than likely, she didn’t want me to sink any more time into it than what I’d already committed.

I don’t know why I did it, but I found myself moving closer to her. I put my hands against both of her arms.

“I’m going to do everything I can to help you,” I said earnestly. “I promise you, Paulina.”

She seemed shocked by the sudden intensity of my words. I felt her hand slide over mine, but she didn’t say anything back for several moments. As the seconds ticked by, I could feel my heart beating rapidly as I stared back into her lovely eyes.

I was committed now. There was no going back.

But whether Paulina was feeling the same was the biggest question.

“Thank you,” she said genuinely. “I should let you settle in for a bit. I have some work I need to do. Maybe we’ll catch up a little later.”

“Sure,” I replied. “Whatever you need.”

Paulina turned to leave but stopped once she was across the threshold.

“For what it’s worth, I’m glad how things worked out today,” she said. “Even losing Mrs. Pennington.”

I smiled. “I think everything worked out just the way it should have worked out.”

Paulina nodded but said nothing further. Before I knew it, she was gone.

Chapter Six

I spent about twenty minutes getting myself acclimated to the room once Paulina was gone, but I became bored very quickly just sitting there on my own. Once everything was settled, I left the room and made my way down the hall.

I could see that the door to Paulina's room was shut, and I remembered her saying she wanted to do some work. I didn't disturb her, and I kept going until I reached Kennedi's room.

I could hear the noise coming from the room right away, and it didn't surprise me to find her playing *Mario Kart 64* while trash-talking whoever was playing against her.

"Oh yeah, why don't you suck on that!" said Kennedi, her fingers mashing the controller. "Nobody blue-shells me and gets away with it!"

I couldn't hold back my smile as I watched her play. She was playing online against a host of others, and for the most part she was kicking some serious ass.

"Hah, fuck you, DK!" yelled Kennedi in her headset as she dropped a banana peel that sent the monkey spiraling out of control.

Within moments, Kennedi crossed the finish line, throwing her arms up in celebration.

"That was some race!" I said from the door, surprising her by the way she jumped.

"Oh, hey!" she said, patting the spot on the couch next to her. "Want to play?"

"Sure."

She grabbed an extra controller and threw it my way. When she got up, I could see that she'd changed out of her maid outfit and was now wearing something that was even more skimpy, if that was even possible. Kennedi was wearing a simple gray tank top that bulged over her large tits before coming in tight against her tummy. She was only wearing a little pair of

black boy shorts too, which gave me an excellent view of her toned, green legs.

“So the biggest question I have for you now is can you play?” she said, giving me an aloof look. “Because I don’t like playing with newbs.”

I smirked at her. “I’ll let my playing do the talking for me.”

It was the right thing to say because she looked intrigued by my confidence. She handed over the controller, and we started a two-person race next.

I hadn’t played *Mario Kart* in years, but I’d played it enough as a kid to remember all the tracks. I was feeling especially good when she put on Yoshi Valley, which was always one of my favorites.

“Let’s see if you can back up that big game you’re talking,” teased Kennedi right as we lined up on the racetrack.

“What do I get if I win?” I joked.

“Psh, you’ll never win.”

“But if I do? What do I get?”

Kennedi gave me the side eye. “If you win, I’ll dance naked for you without a stitch of clothing.”

“Wow, now that’s tempting.”

“But you’re not going to win so don’t get too excited. Besides, you don’t know what I want if I win.”

“As long as you’re not going to force me to wear your maid outfit, I think I’ll be okay.”

She grinned at me. “Tempting, like you said, but maybe I’ll just make you do a naked dance.”

It was so on at that point. We got the green light, and I shot out of the gate because of my well-timed application of the gas button. I darted to the right and then instantly went left.

“Oh, right and then left, interesting strategy,” taunted Kennedi.

I could tell that she went left from the beginning, but I lost track of where she went from there. I did a sliding turn to the left, rejoining the main track as I kept an eye out for Kennedi.

Luckily, she was nowhere to be found, even after I reached the spinning egg. I chanced a look at her screen to see she wasn't far behind me, and she was holding a red shell behind her cart.

"Almost in my sights, sucka," teased Kennedi, who waited until after crossing the last bridge to let loose the shell.

There was nothing I could do to avoid the shell. It smashed into me right before I crossed the finish line, allowing Kennedi to blow by me to take the lead.

Once she had the lead, she didn't lose it. Not even a blue shell on the last lap could let me overtake her. I stayed on her ass to the very end, but it was clear she was the winner of that track.

Kennedi pumped her hands in the air. "The undefeated champion wins again!"

"Okay, not bad, not bad," I said. "You're pretty good."

"You bet your clothing I am," said Kennedi. "But you're not bad either. You can hang, that's for sure."

"So does that mean we can keep playing?"

"Uh, duh, you think I'm going to kick you out now? By the way, you want some elvish pizza?"

My nose wrinkled. "Elvish pizza? What makes it elvish?"

"Oh, it's just as fancy as they are," said Kennedi. "But their pizza is pretty good. Here, have a slice."

She handed one over to me, letting me take a closer look. It had some kind of meat on it, and the sauce looked more brown than it did red. I took a bite, finding that it tasted much better than it looked.

"What's the meat on this?" I asked while still chewing.

"That's pheasant with a mrazberry reduction sauce," replied Kennedi, taking a bite of her slice. "Leave it to the elves to come up with something

so overdone but still so delicious."

I had no idea what the hell a mrazberry was, but it tasted amazing on my pizza. I was helping myself to a second slice not long after.

"So I know a little bit about Paulina," I said, wanting to get to know my new racing partner. "But not so much about you beyond your taste in music and pizza."

"Oh, you know, I'm just a small-town girl," said Kennedi. "Living in a *lonely* world."

"Can your entire life be boiled down to songs?"

"I think just about anyone's can, especially if you find the right song."

"Fair enough," I replied. "Were you born here too?"

"Yup, I'm native," she said. "Actually, I've known Paulina for most of my life. We went to high school together and have been friends ever since."

"So whose idea was it to start the business?"

Kennedi giggled. "Definitely Paulina. She's the serious businesswoman type. I followed her into it because she's my best friend, and I'm not good enough at gaming to earn money by having people watch me play. I haven't regretted it either, even though we seem to be going through a rough patch. Even without your help."

I winced. "Sorry again about Mrs. Pennington."

She touched my arm. "I'm just teasing, really. I hated that bitch too. She told me I was too fat more than once, even after I explained to her that it's just my boobs."

I spared a glance down at her tank top. Kennedi had some of the biggest tits I'd ever seen, but mistaking that for being fat was just plain wrong.

"It seems like she has a penchant for always pissing people off," I joked.

"Oh, does she ever. But most of the people we deal with are pretty cool. And it really helps having your best friend be the boss. Especially when I need a sick day. What about you? What did you do before you were reborn here?"

“Nothing nearly as exciting,” I said. “I worked in an office back on Earth. It was slowly crushing my soul.”

Kennedi snorted. “That bad, huh?”

“Yeah, it wasn’t good. My boss had the tendency to screech whenever he was upset, which happened every fifteen minutes or so. Someone seriously needed to give him a Xanax.”

“The world would be a much better place if people just learned how to chill,” agreed Kennedi. “Stop pissing on everyone’s pizza.”

I grinned before taking another slice for myself. “Exactly. Either way, I’m not sad to be gone from there. I always had this feeling like I didn’t belong. It’s hard for me to explain why I felt that way, but from my job, my friends, my lack of family, nothing really ever felt right.”

Kennedi blew a strand of hair out of her face and looked at me. “Maybe you being here in Dragonmont City will give you the chance to change that? Make the best use of your second chance?”

“I think so too. Which is why I want to do everything I can to help you both.”

“Why is that?” asked Kennedi, pausing the game and putting down her controller. “I’m happy that you want to help but you just met us. Why is it so important to you?”

It was a good question, and honestly, even I was questioning my sanity for how deeply I wanted to help them. I didn’t feel this way in my old life. I wasn’t much for giving to charity, not that I ever had the extra money to give. I didn’t really feel strongly about much besides making enough to just to keep a roof over my head.

So why was this so important to me?

“I don’t know if I can explain that one either,” I said honestly. “It just kinda hit me.”

“Well, I’m glad it did,” said Kennedi. “Paulina is a great person, but she’s not great at asking for help. I secretly think it’s a pride thing, but we could take all the help we could get. And if you earnestly want to help, I’m not going to turn you away. Especially not with you being a human man.”

Kennedi ended that last statement with a throaty giggle, which made me want to get to the bottom of that right now.

“Okay, you have to tell me what’s so special about us?” I asked. “Why do goblin girls like human men?”

She arched an eyebrow. “You really don’t know?”

“There aren’t any goblins on Earth, so no.”

“That’s unfortunate,” said Kennedi. “Well, let me explain. You might have noticed this already but in Dragonmont City, there aren’t a lot of male creatures at all. Most of the city are female. Not sure why this is, but it’s the truth. There’s also very few goblin males, but you’ll never hear a goblin girl complain about a lack of goblin males.”

“Why’s that?” I asked.

Kennedi shivered. “Goblin men are icky. They’re rude, crude, and let’s just say they don’t have the equipment to make us overlook their attitude problems.”

“You mean to say that . . .”

“Oh yes,” confirmed Kennedi. “They have small dicks. Not even just small. Like really, really tiny.”

“Then how do goblins survive?” I asked. “How do you breed?”

“With human men of course,” she said, grinning at me. “A long time ago someone found out that human men make absolutely perfect mates for goblin girls. You’re bigger than us, you protect us, you care for us, and you’re more than capable of love. Not to mention, you have much bigger cocks.”

Kennedi’s eyes flickered down at my manhood, and she bit her lip. “Which reminds me, I still haven’t seen that naked dance you promised me.”

I gulped nervously. “Maybe after you finish telling me about this.”

“Party pooper,” she said, sticking out her tongue. “But still, being with a human man is basically #relationshipgoals. And there’s so few of you that when we find a good one, we have to share.”

“Share?” I asked, coughing awkwardly. “You mean you would share with Paulina?”

“Of course!” she replied. “She’s my best friend, so it’s only natural that we would share if we found someone we both wanted.”

I barely knew what to say to that. “Wow. That definitely gives things a new perspective.”

Kennedi laughed. “Your life just got really interesting, didn’t it?”

“Well, assuming you would be . . . interested?”

Her eyes flickered down to my lips and back to me. “Definitely interested. And I know you’re interested in me.”

“How do you know that?”

Kennedi reached up to adjust her tank top. In the process, she revealed a few more inches of creamy green flesh. “Because you can’t take your eyes off my tits, that’s why,” she whispered.

So I was caught red-handed. My attempts at sneaking a peak of her cleavage hadn’t been so covert after all.

I was definitely embarrassed, but Kennedi made it very clear that I didn’t need to be.

“Do you really think I’d show them off if I didn’t want you looking?” she asked, laughing softly. “There’s a reason why I put on this tank top tonight. It’s especially booby.”

“It’s really booby,” I said. “And honestly, I feel like the luckiest guy ever. I get to live here with you two.”

Kennedi smiled. “If you keep talking like that, maybe I’ll be the one to do the naked dance instead?”

What I wouldn’t give to see that happen? I couldn’t help but stare at her lips, wondering how they would feel mashed against mine. I’d lose every game of *Mario Kart* for the rest of my life if it meant the chance to taste those succulent lips.

I was moving forward before I knew what was going on. I was on autopilot, and I just wanted to get to my final destination—the sweet lips

of this beautiful goblin girl.

Kennedi was moving too. She seemed to be thinking the same thing, that the heat between us was getting too much to ignore. Our lips moved closer still until they finally connected.

It was nothing short of wonderful. Feeling Kennedi's lips against mine was indescribable. I really enjoyed how her lips just seemed to mold against mine, moving against me slowly as we explored each other.

It was made even hotter when Kennedi moaned, her mouth opening to let her tongue out to play. And play it did. I couldn't get enough of playing hide-and-seek with her tongue, loving the taste of her.

I hoped the kiss would last for a lot longer than it did, but then her phone dinged again.

Kennedi growled and broke the kiss, looking down at her phone. She growled again when she saw who it was.

"Some people just have terrible timing," she said once she turned her attention back to me.

"Anything important?" I asked.

She shook her head. "Nah, just my mom. She's one of those helicopter parents. If she doesn't hear from me five times a day, she assumes I've been kidnapped."

I chuckled. "She cares though. Can't fault her for that."

"No, I don't," said Kennedi, typing out a quick message. "But I wish she'd get better timing."

Kennedi tossed the phone down and kissed me again. This one was much quicker than the last one, but she lingered against my lips before pulling away.

"Now that's really . . . magical," said Kennedi, fanning herself once she'd pulled away. "Wow!"

"My first ever kiss with a goblin girl," I said.

"How was it?"

“I’ll remember that for the rest of my life.”

Kennedi beamed with a smile. “Great answer. Now we just need to get Paulina on board.”

“On board?” I asked, confused. “What do you mean by that?”

I wasn’t thrilled with the way she said it, and part of me wondered if my interest in Paulina was more one-sided than anything else.

“I can tell she’s intrigued by you,” replied Kennedi. “And she definitely seemed a little tongue-tied earlier. But Paulina is hard on herself. She doesn’t open up easily to those she doesn’t know.”

“I like her,” I said. “And not just because I want to help.”

“Paulina is easy to like, but she doesn’t date. She doesn’t see anyone, despite all the times I’ve urged her to. I don’t know what she’s waiting for, but she’s definitely waiting on something.”

“Or someone?” I suggested. “Maybe just the right human man to come by?”

Kennedi giggled. “Maybe. If you’re lucky!”

We kept playing and talking for another hour until it was getting pretty late. Kennedi kept kicking my ass in *Mario Kart*, but I was starting to win one game out of ten once I’d shaken all the rust off. We were having a blast, but it was as I shared one tiny little fact of my life with Kennedi that she paused the game in a hurry and dragged me all the way to Paulina’s room, where we barged down the door.

We found Paulina sitting behind her desk with a pair of black glasses perched high on her green nose. She looked up at us with shock as Kennedi dragged me over to her desk.

“Paulina, we have to let Kevin be our official business advisor moving forward!” Kennedy said suddenly.

Paulina looked confused. “What? Why?”

Kennedi turned toward me and shook my arm. “Tell her what your major was in college.”

I gave Paulina a sheepish look. “Uh, I majored in business.”

Kennedi let out an excited squeal before rebounding on Paulina. “Did you hear that? Business, Paulina! He’s the perfect person to help us! He knows all about *business*!”

Kennedi let go of my arm and started clapping in a way that was totally adorable. I shared a skeptical look with Paulina, who seemed to be thinking the same thing I was.

“Not to burst your bubble, Kennedi, but I don’t know everything about business,” I said, testing the waters. “I mean, I know some things about it. I’m sure I can find a way to help but I’m no expert.”

If Kennedi had any doubts, she didn’t show them.

“He’s just being modest,” she said before grabbing Paulina’s hand. “Let’s make it official. Let’s invite him into the company as our advisor!”

“An advisor?” questioned Paulina. “But we don’t even know if he would want to stay to help us. It’s a big leap from helping us replace Mrs. Pennington to actually joining the company. And he’s not a goblin girl.”

“I don’t think I’d fit into the maid outfits anyway,” I added.

“Not that I wouldn’t pay to see you try,” quipped Kennedi. “But you’re not a maid. You leave the cleaning to us, and you get to help us find more clients. Not just a new Mrs. Pennington. *All* new clients moving forward! That sounds like a perfect compromise.”

I expected to see Paulina be the voice of reason at a time like this, but to my surprise, she was looking at me like she was trying to feel me out. At that point I realized just how badly this business needed my help.

“What do you think, Kevin?” asked Paulina quietly. “It’s okay to say no. I mean, you barely know us, and you know we’re not in the best shape—”

“I’ll do it,” I said quickly.

Paulina’s mouth froze open. “Seriously?”

I smiled. “Of course.”

“But just like that? We’re not exactly the picture of a well-run business here.”

“Which only makes it more important that I help you,” I said. “If anyone needs help, it’s you two. I’m not saying that to be mean or anything, but I’d much rather help you succeed than do something that wouldn’t feel as rewarding. So I’m in.”

“What do you think we should call him?” asked Kennedi, clearly having already processed it all. “Chief Business Officer? Director of Sales? My personal favorite is CHO.”

“What does CHO stand for?” asked Paulina.

Kennedi grinned. “Chief Handsome Officer.”

We all started laughing at that, even as Paulina turned a darker shade of green. “Kennedi! Be serious for once.”

“Oh, I’m totally serious about how yummy he is,” said Kennedi, seemingly with no shame whatsoever. “But I’m open to Kevin picking his own title.”

“Let’s just wait on the titles for now,” I said, putting up both hands. “Believe me, as much as I like having you two beauties call me handsome, let’s just see what I can bring to the table first, okay?”

Kennedi elbowed Paulina. “He called us beauties. Did you hear that?”

Paulina elbowed Kennedi back a little too hard, which made Kennedi shirk away.

“Ow! Okay, I’m open to whatever Kevin wants to do.”

“That’s fine by me too,” said Paulina, who was now starting to smile again. It was a smile that I never wanted to see fade away, and I was determined to keep it there for as long as possible.

“So when do we get started?” I asked. “Because I’ll want to understand everything you’re doing currently so I can help make recommendations.”

“Tomorrow morning?” suggested Paulina, who started to yawn. “Because I’m getting sleepy. And I don’t mind you having the night to reconsider what you just signed up for either.”

I laughed. “Fat chance of that. I think you two are stuck with me now.”

“He makes that sound like a bad thing,” Kennedi muttered to Paulina. When Paulina glared at her, Kennedi gave me a mock salute. “Reporting for duty, CHO. Ready for orders. *Any* orders you want.”

“Okay, let’s get some sleep first,” I said, agreeing with Paulina. “Then tomorrow, we’ll do a deep dive.”

“Deep diving it is,” said Kennedi. She leaned in close and gave me a peck on the lips. “See you tomorrow, CHO. Can’t wait to work *under* you.”

She wiggled her eyebrows for good effect before disappearing from Paulina’s office.

“She can be a little too much at times,” said Paulina with an awkward laugh. “If she makes you uncomfortable, just let me know and I’ll assign her to another bitchy fairy for a few weeks.”

“She’s more than fine,” I said, laughing with her. “I like her. And I like you.”

The smile melted from Paulina’s face to something that was much more . . . heated. More than anything, I wanted to kiss her. I wanted to lean her back against that desk and run my hands across every inch of that teasing green flesh.

I’d already seen Kennedi lose control, but Paulina was more measured than that. The look disappeared as quickly as it arrived, and she stood up from her desk seconds later.

“Well, we should probably get some sleep,” she said. “See you first thing in the morning?”

“Of course. I’m looking forward to it.”

She smiled. “Me too.”

Paulina stopped next to me before she turned off the light. She leaned over and gave me a peck on the cheek. It was more chaste than the kiss that Kennedi gave me, but this one seemed more full of promise than anything else.

“Goodnight, Kevin.”

“Goodnight, Paulina.”

Chapter Seven

I SLEPT SOUNDLY THAT NIGHT. Even though I was alone in bed and I had two lovely goblin girls on the brain, my soul was weirdly at peace. I didn't feel uncertain at all about my future in Dragonmont City, and I even surprised myself at how willing I was to let go of my old life.

I got out of bed with a significant spring in my step. I paused to look out the window of my room, seeing the glimmering buildings of Dragonmont City in the distance. The sun was just starting to come up, and I could see the city shrouded in the soft orange haze of early morning. Overhead, I could already make out several dragons transporting people throughout the city, as well as a family of ogres that were walking down the next street.

There was just something magical, figuratively and literally, about this place, and I could still see it even inside the walls of the duplex.

I left my room, wondering if Paulina would even be awake yet. It wasn't a surprise to see light coming from her room, with the door already open while she pounded away at the computer on her desk. I could see that was still wearing her sleeping clothes, which weren't as revealing as the kind that Kennedi wore. Paulina's outfit consisted of neat silken pajamas that covered her from neck down to her ankles.

Still, even with the silk blocking much of my view, it wasn't hard to tell that Paulina had some seriously mouthwatering curves underneath that thin layer of fabric. What made the entire picture even more adorable was the fact that she was wearing those really cute black-rimmed glasses from last night.

Was there a more stunning goblin girl anywhere in creation? I thought not.

Paulina saw me at the door and beckoned me in. "Good morning! How'd you sleep?"

"Never better," I replied. "And I'm ready to have you put me to work today."

Paulina giggled. "Those sound like famous last words. I'll give you one more chance to reconsider before you're stuck with us."

“Bring it on,” I said, walking closer to the desk. I could see that she was ready for me, having already put a chair next to the desk so I could sit down. As I did, I could see a spreadsheet on her desktop that was surprisingly simple for what I expected the business to have.

“So you already know all the basics about us,” started Paulina. “You know the business name, and you know all the employees who work here.”

“Goblin Girl Maid Service and you, Kennedi, and now myself,” I said, ticking them off with my fingers.

Paulina smiled. “Exactly. What you don’t know is how the business works. Or how we get by. I told you already that our market clientele is dominated by one group of creatures.”

“The very affluent fairies.”

“Right, so there are many other groups that offer maid service to the fairies, and we all post on the same board. Here, let me show you.”

Paulina minimized the spreadsheet and brought up what looked like a posting forum called Fairy Fixer Friends. At first glance, it seemed like an all-purpose forum for any services that the fairies needed, including a separate sub-forum where the fairies posted a need for cleaning jobs.

“So here’s how it works,” said Paulina. “We get help wanted posts here on the forum. Most of the time, the posts are for a single penthouse or one family of fairies. Those are the most competitive because anyone can bid for them, and they don’t require a lot of manpower.”

“Makes sense,” I said. “I wouldn’t expect a high cost of entry for that.”

“I take those jobs sometimes when the business is particularly lean,” admitted Paulina. “Like I’m probably going to bid on the three new ones you see right here.”

I glanced where she was pointing to see three new posts that were just made this morning. All of them were marked as single-family residences.

“But that’s not where the money is,” said Paulina. “I’d be lucky to get one of them and since it’s so competitive, I really have to lower my rates. Where you can find the big money are places like these.”

Paulina clicked on a posting from four days ago. Inside, I read that a property management group was seeking maid service for an entire *building*. The building was downtown and boasted of having over a hundred different penthouses and suites. As Paulina scrolled down, I could read that she put in a bid four days ago when the post came out, as well as a few other maid service companies. Overall, the post had a lot less responses than the single-family ones.

“So these are the ones I keep an eye on,” said Paulina. “Because if we can land just one of these contracts, we’ll have more than enough money to operate the business and still turn a profit.”

“But how would you do that with just the two of you?” I asked. “A hundred penthouses would require more maids, no?”

“Oh, definitely,” said Paulina. “And that’s the problem I keep running into. Many of these places require the maids to already be working with the company, so it’s a catch-22. I’ll put my bid in anyway, but I get disqualified because there’s only two of us. But I can’t hire more maids until I get one of these bigger contracts. So we get stuck.”

I was beginning to see the heart of the problem. Paulina’s business needed to scale upward, but she had no cash with which to do so. Typically, that could be solved with one visit to the bank though, at least back on Earth.

“Have you tried to apply for a loan?” I asked. “Something to get you some cash in the short term so you can hire more girls and go after one of these bids?”

Paulina’s head lowered. “Tried that route. Unfortunately, I have bad credit, so most banks refuse to loan to me and the ones that do would charge an absurd amount of interest. I even tried a less-than-savory loan shark, and that experience was so terrible, I’ll never do it again.”

“Did he hound you?”

“Worse,” said Paulina quietly. “He didn’t keep to the terms of his agreement, and when I couldn’t pay because he kept demanding more and more money, he started taking Kennedi’s gaming consoles.”

Suddenly, I found out why Kennedi was missing some of her consoles.

“That’s such a shitty thing to do, I’m sorry, Paulina.”

“I had to do something,” she said, reaching up to touch the space around her neck. “I had a gold necklace that my parents left me that was worth a lot of money. I had to pawn it to get the money to pay him off. I didn’t breathe a sigh of relief until long after he was gone.”

My eyes flickered down to her bare neck and back to her eyes. I could see water in her eyes, and I could tell she was doing everything she could to hold back the tears.

I put my arm around her shoulder. “I’m sorry that happened to you. People can really suck sometimes.”

Paulina wiped her eyes. “Yeah, but that’s what I get for trusting a crummy loan shark, I guess. Either way, I gave up ever getting a loan at that point.”

I nodded. “I don’t blame you for that.”

“So I mostly hope and pray to get lucky,” she continued. “Maybe I’ll find a posting without the pre-hired help requirement.”

“Can you walk me through the application process?” I asked. “Or is responding to this post to tell them you’re interested the only step?”

“No, it’s a little more detailed than that,” she said, scrolling up to the original post. “See this link here? That’s the link to the application. Everything that comes on the 3F forum uses roughly the same application process. Here, let me show you.”

She clicked the link, which brought up her application from four days ago. I could see that it asked basic questions about the business, including the name, number of employees, and years in business. There was a spot for contact information, as well as a website, and lastly a small blurb about why they would be a good fit for the job. Lastly, you include your company’s bid.

“And then you just hit send and it goes through. You usually get an answer pretty quickly. This one I got an email a few hours later telling me that we were disqualified and that was that.”

“What about if you get picked?” I asked. “Do they just tell you congratulations and start on this date?”

“Sometimes the smaller ones do,” said Paulina. “The bigger ones typically like to meet you beforehand. I’ve also run into it where you have to fill out a more detailed application. Sometimes they’ll have a bidding war between two groups, and they’ll have an interview with both back-to-back. Those get really interesting sometimes. The biggest thing to understand is not every process is identical.”

“Can you click on your website?” I asked. “I want to see what you have on it.”

Paulina clicked the link, and I found myself wincing for the first time that morning.

Her website would have looked dated twenty years ago. Whoever did it clearly had only a basic understanding of layouts, and I couldn’t get over how amateurish it looked.

“Paulina, don’t take this the wrong way, but who made your website?” I asked, still cringing.

She looked guilty. “Why? Does something look bad?”

“It just looks . . . old,” I said. “It’s not that you don’t have all the information you need on it, but just that it looks incredibly dated. If I were to be hiring for a job and I looked at this website, I wouldn’t hire you. And it would have nothing to do with your skills, but more that it looks like you’re not a serious company.”

Paulina’s expression hardened. “But we are a serious company!”

“I know, I know, but they don’t know that,” I said. “And they will absolutely judge a book by its cover.”

Paulina grunted. “Well, I think that’s kinda stupid.”

“I don’t disagree with you, but I think this is an area I can help you with. We need to modernize your website, because I’m sure your competition has something that’s really good. Can you bring up a website of one of your competitors?”

“Sure,” said Paulina, making a few clicks. Suddenly, I saw a very professional website that featured a lovely goblin girl in a non-suggestive maid outfit. More than anything, it screamed “pick me.”

“This is an ideal template or starting point,” I said. “I bet you this company does extremely well.”

“They don’t have any problems getting bids,” said Paulina. “The last I checked, they hold the contracts for three buildings and have a staff of twenty girls.”

“The best business advice I can give anyone starting out is to model yourself after someone who’s already successful. And since these girls are, we’ll start here. I have some more ideas though. Can you go back to the application page? The one that you submitted four days ago.”

Paulina clicked back and let me scan it for a few seconds. I started pointing at a box for attachments.

“You didn’t attach anything to this application, right? Nothing extra?”

“No,” replied Paulina. “Should I have?”

“Well, it depends,” I replied. “But if they offered an attachment feature, I think that would be a great place to include another reason why they should hire you. Maybe a list of references, or some customer testimonials, or even a video about the business. Stuff like that. Do you have any references?”

“Um, nothing handy,” said Paulina, searching one of the drawers on her desk. “I’m sure I could get some that are more recent.”

“I think that would be a great starting place,” I said. “What better way to tell your new customers how great you are by letting them hear from some of our current customers?”

Paulina brightened. “That makes a lot of sense. And I like the video idea too.”

“Me too,” I said, smiling back at her. “A video commercial that tells them what Goblin Girl Maid Service is all about. That way you get something a little extra. You practically get your own interview even when they don’t ask for one. They already know you on a more personal level than these other listings. It could be a great leg up.”

Paulina looked excited as she started writing all this stuff down. “That’s an amazing idea!”

It didn’t take long at all until we had a solid list of things to change. The biggest item on the list was the website, which I was going to take the lead on. Paulina was going to assemble her references, and we were also going to look to get a short video filmed, as well as update her profile on Fairy Friends so that the testimonials were in her signature.

It was just another way we could get the word out at how great the company was, and I thought it would really help us.

There was one thing I noticed though before we could take a break. There was a picture on the other side of Paulina’s desk with an older goblin woman centered on the frame. She had long, dark hair, and her face bore many resemblances to the woman right next to me.

“I’m going to go out on a limb here, but is that your mother?” I asked, pointing at the picture.

Paulina smiled and picked it up. “Not hard to tell, is it? Yes, this is her. This was taken just a few years after I was born. She was the one who started the business. She was the very first maid, and my father ran the business side of it. They did very well for themselves for years, until they wanted to retire. I tried to learn as much as I could from them, but I can’t say that I don’t miss them like crazy. Not only as parents but as mentors. There’s so much that I don’t know that they did. I didn’t absorb enough lessons from them before they died.”

“I’m sure they’d be proud of you though,” I said quietly. “Sure, it’s hard, but if they could see that you’re still making it work today, I bet they would be very happy to know that.”

“I hope so,” said Paulina. “I just wanted to make them proud of me. And more than anything, I don’t want to see their business go under.”

I grabbed her hand and squeezed. “We won’t let it go under, Paulina. I promise you that.”

She squeezed my hand back. “You’re such a good guy, Kevin. Because of you, I have the first ray of sunshine that I’ve had in a while. I try to be optimistic about the business, but sometimes the crushing reality of it all just overwhelms me. When you tell me it’s going to be okay, I can’t help but believe you.”

That was a lot of weight to have on my shoulders, but it was the fulfilling kind of weight. It felt like I was going to do this even if it killed me because it was the right thing to do.

“Baby steps,” I said. “We can’t fix everything in one day. Let’s start taking chunks out of our to-do list, and soon enough, we should start getting more business.”

“That sounds absolutely wonderful,” said Paulina.

She let out a deep sigh and then looked at the time. “Oh, this would be perfect. Come on, let’s go to the terrace. We might just still catch it this morning!”

“Catch what?” I asked, but Paulina was already dragging me away from her desk. I followed her as we moved throughout the duplex and up the stairs. I tried really, *really* hard not to ogle Paulina’s perfectly-formed ass as it bounced up the stairs, looking like a game of pong as each cheek wobbled in turn.

Okay, so maybe I did ogle it more than I should have. Sue me.

Paulina didn’t stop until we arrived on the roof. She pulled me all the way to the edge, next to the hot tub, and let out a big sigh of approval.

I could tell why she liked this time of day. The sun had come up a little bit further now, and the entire city was illuminated by its rays. It was such a beautiful sight to see it all before us. In a way, it was strangely metaphorical, as it was like a new day had dawned on Goblin Girl Maid Service—a new day that would give us the second chance we needed.

I couldn’t help myself. I pulled Paulina into my arms, feeling her rest her head against my chest as we looked out on the view.

“It’s just so beautiful,” she said. “Sometimes I come here by myself to look at the sunrise. Kennedi isn’t much of an early riser unless she has to work. Even then, she just gets herself ready and goes out the door. For me though? I love watching the city awaken. It makes me feel alive in a way.”

“I know exactly what you mean,” I said. As much as I loved the sunrise, I was feeling more alive by the second, thanks to the feeling of Paulina crushed against my chest.

She turned her face toward me as the rays of the sun highlighted her pretty features. “I don’t think I deserve you. But I’m so thankful that we crossed paths.”

“Me too,” I said quietly. “More than you know, Paulina.”

She let out a content sigh as the air between us became super charged with energy. I wasn’t sure who moved first, but before I knew what was happening, we were kissing.

I swore that I could hear angels sing somewhere in the distance. The taste and feel of Paulina’s kiss was everything I ever wanted it to be and more. I couldn’t get enough of her, and judging by the eagerness of her lips pushing back, she couldn’t either.

It was a kiss like none other I’d ever experienced. Right then I knew that this was meant to happen. Whatever existence I had back on Earth was only preparing me for this second chance in Dragonmont City.

And if I could spend it with Paulina and Kennedi, I would be the happiest guy for it.

By the time the kiss ended, my hands were draped around Paulina’s body. One was carefully placed against her lower back while the other had dipped down to the swell of her ass.

More than anything, I wanted to keep going. I wanted to take her downstairs and serenade her until she never wanted to do anything else but look into my eyes.

But Paulina had more control than that. She smiled at me before bringing her green hand up to my cheek to caress it.

“I really should get going soon,” she whispered. “I have five places I need to clean today sadly.”

I felt like she really meant it when she said sadly. That gave me a more than just a sliver of hope.

“You’ve got to earn that bacon, I understand,” I said. “I should get started today too. I want to get you a better website and that involves finding someone who can do it for us.”

We separated but only reluctantly. I was about to follow Paulina back downstairs when my eyes fell on the hot tub.

And it gave me an idea.

“Hold on a second,” I said.

I approached the hot tub and took the lid off, finding the stagnant nasty water inside. Paulina retraced her steps to stand next to me, her nose wiggling once she smelled the inside.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

I pressed the buttons on the side, trying to get the hot tub to start. It was the same thing I did yesterday, having the same results. Something about it didn’t sit right with me.

“Do you have a screwdriver?” I asked.

My request must have caught her off guard because she let out an awkward laugh. “Sure, I think there’s one in the utility closet downstairs. Hang on a second.”

Paulina was back in a few minutes, this time clutching two different screwdrivers—a Philips and a flat-head.

“I didn’t know which one you needed so I brought both.”

“Is there a way you can be any more perfect?” I asked, making her blush a deep green color.

“I could have a working hot tub?” she suggested.

“Don’t worry, I’m going to take care of that.”

I grabbed the Philips screwdriver and took off the side panel, looking for the motor. Right now, I still didn’t know if the motor was in decent shape, and that would determine whether this would be an easy fix or an expensive one.

Once the panel was off, I could see directly inside, thanks to the way the sun illuminated the interior.

Remarkably, everything look to be in good shape. The piping looked great, the valves seemed to work, and I didn’t see any frayed wires. There was

nothing that stood out to me as the obvious culprit of why the tub wouldn't turn on.

So now it was time for plan B.

"Paulina, where's your breaker box?" I asked.

She gave me a strange look. "You mean that gray box with all the little switches inside?"

She was so adorable that it hurt. I smiled. "Exactly."

"Oh, it's downstairs in the basement."

"Can you take me to it?"

I followed her all the way to the basement, wondering if the solution to the problem could be that easy. I wasn't going to complain if that was the case, but it would definitely make getting the tub running a more short-term inexpensive project.

"Here it is," said Paulina, opening the panel once we were downstairs. "I don't come down here much."

"It's okay, let me just see what's inside here."

I could see the power hookups for just about every major room and appliance in the house. I traced my finger down the listing, not stopping until I saw the hot tub.

"Eureka!" I shouted once I saw it.

"What is it?" asked Paulina.

"Just what I suspected," I said. "You flipped a breaker. That's why the tub's not turning on."

I flipped the breaker back to the on position and then grabbed Paulina's hand as we went back up to the terrace.

As we approached the side of the tub, I could see the lights had illuminated on the control panel. Once we got closer, I saw the tub going through its pre-start checklist.

"You did it!" shrieked a very happy Paulina. "You got it started again!"

She pushed her way into my arms and hugged me.

“This is a very lucky break for us,” I said. “I don’t think there’s anything wrong with the pumps thankfully. I think you just flipped a breaker which is why it stopped working one day.”

Paulina looked a little embarrassed. “I would have never thought to check in there either.”

I kissed her in response. “This just means it’ll be a lot easier to fix. Hold on a second though. I need to turn the breaker off again.”

She frowned for a moment. “But why? Why turn it off again?”

I pointed to the water in the tub. “We don’t want it to turn on without being all the way full of water. If we get air in the pumps, that becomes another problem. I also don’t want that dirty water cycling through the pumps either, or any debris clogging the filter. We’ll turn it off for now and focus on getting fresh water inside.”

I raced downstairs to hit the breaker before coming back. In the meantime, I’d thought of a few more things.

“Paulina, did your parents have a place where they kept some supplies for the tub? I’m talking things like chemicals or some equipment. Maybe like a sump pump or something?”

“They kept most of that stuff in the same room I got the screwdrivers,” she said. “I can take you down there?”

“Lead the way, gorgeous,” I said, beaming.

The utility closet was on the sparsely-used second floor of the house, where I could see two more bedrooms, a bathroom, as well as the closet itself. I stepped inside and immediately found what I was looking for.

“Double eureka!” I said, making Paulina giggle. “Look at this little treasure trove!”

Not only did I find a working sump pump, but I also found a shop-vac, two hoses, a skimmer, a long-handled brush, and a shelf of chemicals.

“Do you have everything you need?” asked Paulina after a moment.

“Just about everything,” I said, looking at the chemicals. “You’re out of chlorine, but that’s an easy fix. I can go out and get some today. But everything else is in here.”

I turned to face her. “I don’t see any reason why this tub isn’t up and running within the next day or so.”

It looked like she could have kissed me again. I hadn’t seen such a smile on her face since I’d known her.

“I can’t believe how easy this is,” she said. “Now it makes me feel stupid for letting it sit for as long as it did.”

“Don’t feel stupid,” I said, rubbing her shoulders. “You just have to know where to start with them. I’ll take this on as my project today too. By the time you get home from work tomorrow, I’ll have the tub and some wine waiting for you.”

Paulina let out a low moan. “Oh my god, that sounds so amazing. I could really use a nice, relaxing soak.”

Now that was an image that I wanted burned into my brain. The idea of seeing both Paulina and Kennedi relaxing in the tub, wearing next to nothing as my eyes roamed over miles of tantalizing green flesh.

I had to stop before I got hard, but it was definitely an idea I wanted to revisit later.

Chapter Eight

"Bye, Kevin!" waved both Paulina and Kennedi as they left the house about twenty minutes later. "See you this afternoon!"

I waved back at them from the front door of the duplex. I wasn't in a hurry to go back inside, not when I could admire the lovely way they filled out their maid uniforms. I didn't think there was a way I could be more attracted to the stunning green women, but I wasn't complaining.

I was only a day into my new life, and I didn't regret a thing.

I did have a few jobs I wanted to do today, and I wanted to surprise the girls with my progress when they got home. First on that list was the website.

I went to Paulina's room, where she'd created a secondary login to her computer just for my access. Just for fun, I brought up their website so I could remind myself of everything that would need to be fixed. As soon as I saw the one-page design with a single color background and small font, I knew it would be best to start from scratch.

I'd have to find a website developer, but I wasn't sure where to start. Back on Earth, I would just do a Google search until I found a good lead, but was there such a thing as Google in Dragonmont City?

As it turned out, there was.

As I opened a new tab on her browser, I typed in "website developer" and hit enter. To my surprise, the page went directly to a search engine called Stoogle.

I snorted when I saw the name. Someone either had a great sense of irony or they were a fan of the movie *Hot Tub Time Machine*.

"Or possibly both," I said under my breath.

Either way, I found a few sites where I could search for developers, but I was instantly dismayed by the cost that it would take to hire most of them. It wasn't hard to see why. Those developers that had great profiles—with samples of awesome websites that they'd designed—would cost an arm and *two* legs to hire.

I knew I didn’t have that much money. Paulina gave me a budget figure to stay under, and for most of these guys, that budget wouldn’t even cover the front page let alone the rest of the website.

Even the middle of the road developers were out of my price range. I found one for a spunky orc girl who was just above budget. I reached out to her email address to see if she would be flexible.

She responded within five minutes, much to my surprise; however, her answer was that her rates weren’t flexible.

Well, shit.

I left that website and tried another. This one billed itself as a budget website where anyone could do just about anything for a small fee. It reminded me of a fantasy version of Fiverr. What sucked was that most of the developers weren’t free to add any new projects so booking them would have to wait weeks or in some cases, months.

I didn’t want to have to wait that long to get going on this. I got the impression from talking with Paulina that they only had enough funds to keep the business alive for another few weeks so I needed to start looking elsewhere.

I combed through three other sites and spent another forty-five minutes looking before I got frustrated. Surely there had to be one developer in this entire city who could work with us, right?

If that was the case, I had a hard time finding them.

It got to the point that I was so frustrated with it that I had to step away. I needed fresh air, and I found myself on the rooftop terrace as I tried to think of a way around this problem.

“I just need a simple website,” I muttered to myself. “Why is that so hard?”

My eyes fell on the hot tub after a few minutes. At least I knew how to fix that problem, and I wouldn’t have to spend hours behind a desk looking for a repairman.

The more I thought about it, the more I wanted to do *something*. If it wasn’t going to be the website, then at least it was going to be the tub.

Maybe I would revisit the website situation later this afternoon after I'd gotten some work in. At least then I would feel useful.

The first thing I needed to do was to get this stagnant water out. That would go a long way to removing the stench that arrived every time I took the lid off. I went down to the utility closet to grab the sump pump and a hose and brought them back to the terrace.

I attached the hose to the sump pump and then lowered it into the water before plugging it in. Instantly, I heard the tiny roar of the engine as it started pumping out that nasty water. I aimed the hose toward a drain on the roof, praying that I wouldn't back it up as the tub emptied.

Thankfully, nothing of the sort happened. The drain took all the water I put in it until there was about a couple inches left on the very bottom.

Now it was time for my shop-vac. I climbed into the tub and vacuumed out the last bit of water before it was finally empty.

Next was the fun part—cleaning. I pulled out a few rags, the brush, and a cleaning solution that wouldn't damage the inner shell. I kicked off most of my clothing before I hopped in, not wanting to stain them with the chemicals or the remains of the old water.

I started scrubbing. I scrubbed around that entire tub for nearly an hour as the day heated up. I was sweating buckets by that point, needing to use the hose on my head to cool down several times before I had that tub looking brand new. When I finally climbed out of it, I used the extended-handle brush to take care of the last few spots before I was sure the tub sparkled.

I was starting to get hungry at that point. Deciding to let the tub dry out by the sun, I went down to the kitchen where I ate a few more peaches and had a blueberry muffin before hopping in the shower, hoping to wash all the griminess off my body.

By the time I was done with both, about fifty minutes had passed and I returned to the roof. The tub was almost completely dried, but I took a clean rag to hit the last few spots before attaching the hose to the nearby spigot.

I turned the water on and watched as it started to fill up the bottom of the tub.

Now it was time to check the filter. The one that had been in place before was all cruddy and gross, so I pitched it. I was afraid I would have to buy a new one, but I saw that there was a brand new spare sitting in the utility closet just waiting to be used.

I said a silent thank-you to Paulina's parents before installing the new filter.

There was nothing else I needed to do at that point before the tub was full. I could tell water was coming out relatively quickly, and I estimated it would only take a little more than an hour to fill it all the way.

In the meantime, I decided to check on the emails I'd sent out this morning. Hopefully I'd had a response from the few developers that were within our price range. I went back down to Paulina's office and was disappointed when I only saw one email waiting for me, turning me down.

I started searching again, and I thought I might have found someone not long after. A troll responded to my email (an actual troll, not an internet pest) who ran a business called Lawrence's Webby Webs.

The name wasn't promising, but his offer to quote me a fair price was something that I couldn't look away from. Lawrence came back with a price that was just over the top end of our budget, but he was available to start working within the next week.

I was excited because I thought I'd finally gotten a break. I didn't know how Paulina would feel about the time frame, but at least it was something. I made a mental note to talk with her about it that night before going up to the terrace to check on the tub.

When I saw the glittering, clear waters of the tub looking back at me, I had to grin. On a day like this, that water just looked so inviting. I dipped my hand into it, finding the water very cool to the touch. It wasn't ready to get into yet, but it would be very soon.

Once the water was to the top, I went down to the breaker box and flipped it on. Now that the tub was full, the jets could be allowed to run without doing any damage to the pump. The tub went through the pre-start checklist and then finally turned on.

I was so excited when I saw it pumping real water for the very first time. The temperature readout might have only been sixty-eight degrees, but I knew it would be ready to go by tomorrow. The last thing I would need to do is make sure the chemicals were right.

That was when I ran into my first problem with the tub. Paulina's parents had left a box of test strips with the other supplies but somehow moisture had gotten into the box and contaminated all the strips. I would need a new box of strips, and since I already knew I needed chlorine, I had a reason to find a supply shop.

A quick Stoogle search pulled up a hot tub place that was a good ten minute walk away, that was marked by a shopping plaza in the opposite direction of downtown. I walked with considerable spring in my step, saying hello to just about every creature or family that crossed my path.

I found the place easily because of the brightly-marked lettering on the outside of the building, as well as the picture of the steamy hot tub right next to it. The bell on the door jingled as I entered, and I saw a row of brand new hot tubs as well as a giant section of filters on the opposite side of it.

I knew it was going to be a small miracle if I could get out of here without blowing my entire budget. Still, it was as I was looking near the filters that I heard the sound of a very sweet voice behind me.

"Hey, there! Can I help you find something?"

I turned and my jaw nearly hit the floor. Standing in front of me was yet another stunning goblin girl, this one wearing nothing more than a tiny pair of jean shorts and a hot-pink bikini top. She looked incredible, from her wavy, auburn-red hair and her toned and visible abs all the way down to her long, athletic legs.

This girl was the whole package, and I could only stutter in reply.

"You'll have to say that again," she said, giggling at me. "I don't speak tongue-tied!"

I loved hearing her voice. It was almost like she had a Southern accent, and it was so charming that I was having a hard time forming words. I

shook myself out of the daze I was in. “Sorry. I just needed a few supplies.”

“Can I help you find anything?” she asked warmly. “Chemicals? Filters? Test strips? Maybe a whole new hot tub if it’s my lucky day?”

“I have to pass on the new tub,” I said, chuckling. “But I could use some chlorine and some test strips.”

“Right this way!” she said, beckoning me to follow her.

I had to admit—the first glimpse of her ass in those jean shorts had me nearly rock hard. I had to do a quick readjust for my boner before she caught me, but I just loved the way she filled out that denim.

I also loved how just the tiniest hint of ass cheek was visible right underneath.

If she noticed me ogling her, she didn’t say a thing. She grabbed something off one of the end caps and tossed it back at me.

“Here are your test strips!” she said as she continued to walk. “Over fifty strips in that bottle, so it should last you awhile!”

I checked the price tag to find that they were very cheap. Well within budget.

Double score.

I followed her to the other side of the store, where we found the section for the chemicals. She led me right up to the chlorine, where her hand settled on a five-pound pail.

“This will be the best bang for your buck,” she said brightly. “It’s a much better deal than buying the one-pounders for sure.”

“That’s exactly what I need,” I said, looking at the pail. “This is perfect.”

“So whatcha working on?” she asked, smiling at me with those dazzlingly white teeth. “You look like the kind of guy that’s working on a project.”

“Well, I kinda am,” I said. “I just moved in with two girls who have a hot tub that hasn’t been used in a while. I told them I’d help to get it running again.”

“Two girls?” she asked, letting out a low whistle and grinning mischievously. “You must be pretty popular then!”

As she said that, my eyes darted toward her bikini top, seeing it stretched tight around her boobs. My gaze flickered back up to her eyes, and the look that she gave me afterward told me that she noticed my look.

“I don’t know about that,” I said. “I was just reborn here. Trying to figure out the way Dragonmont City works, you know?”

“Oh, you mean the RLD?” she said excitedly. “I have a good friend who’s been reborn too!”

“Really? Is she a beautiful goblin girl too?” I asked.

She smiled when I called her beautiful. “According to her, she was just a little ugly ogre girl before this life. Not sure I believe her though. She’s taken to being a goblin a bit too easily, if you know what I mean!”

I was entranced with her accent. I loved the twang of every word, like it bounced around her mouth before it escaped. I could have listened to her read the dictionary and still been entirely enthralled with it.

She waved her hand. “You still there? Are yah daydreamin’ or something?”

“Sorry, I can get spacey at times! I didn’t mean anything by it.”

“It’s quite alright,” she said. “Say, what’s your name? Mine’s Sadie.”

“I’m Kevin.”

She reached out to shake my hand, and I noticed that her grip didn’t loosen very several tense seconds. Not that I cared of course.

“Well, welcome to Dragonmont then, Kevin,” she said. “I hope you’re finding yourself at home here in this new world.”

“Believe me, it’s getting better by the second,” I said, which made her giggle again.

“Glad to hear it. If you’re ready to get rung up, can I take you to the front counter?”

“Sure, that sounds great.”

I grabbed the pail of chlorine and the strips and followed Sadie's bouncy ass all the way to the counter. Behind the counter, I could see a dragon with thick-rimmed glasses reading the paper. He was perched on a stool, and he gave me the stink-eye as I walked by.

"Got another newcomer here to Dragonmont City, Mitch!" said Sadie, addressing the dragon while pointing at me. "Isn't that wonderful?"

The dragon grunted, and I saw wisps of fire escape his nose before turning his attention back to his paper.

"Don't worry about Mitch," whispered Sadie quietly. "He's the owner, and he's always grumpy for some reason or another."

"How can you be grumpy with a place like this?" I asked, looking around the tubs. "This seems like a great place to work."

I was mostly saying that for Sadie's benefit. It wasn't the store so much but her bright, positive attitude that made it so welcoming.

"Eh, it has its days," said Sadie, saying more with her choice of words than she probably intended. "And it pays the bills, so that's nice."

"We all need something like that," I said knowingly.

Sadie began to ring me up, and it was then that I noticed we had a small problem.

"Okay, so your strips will be one bronze opal," announced Sadie. "And your pail of chlorine comes to twenty bronze opals. So twenty-one opals in total."

I reached into my pocket, grabbing everything that Paulina had left me for my budget. I let it hit the counter, and I pursed my lips when I didn't have enough.

"Only ten bronze opals," I said quietly. "Crap. Maybe I have to buy the one-pounder bottle of chlorine after all. How much is it?"

"Only six opals," said Sadie as the smile disappeared from her face.

I hoped she wasn't paid on commission or anything. That was the only thing that could explain the sudden disappearance of her smile until she started talking again.

“Hang on, I don’t think we got that shipment of one-pounders in yet,” she said, bolting from the counter and moving toward the chemicals.

She was gone for only a minute before returning empty-handed.

“I’m so sorry, Kevin,” she said with a frown. “We’re out of the one-pounders right now. I only have the five-pound pail.”

“Crap,” I said quietly. “I don’t have enough to get both. I don’t even have enough just to get the pail. Well, that sucks.”

“I’m so sorry,” she said, turning green with embarrassment. She checked a piece of paper near the register. “We should get the one-pounders back in stock in about three days if you’re willing to wait?”

I winced. “I really should get it going soon. I kinda promised the girls I’d have it ready by tomorrow.”

I truly felt bad. Not just about the money situation but because Sadie was disappointed too. I figured I could probably find another store, but there was no telling how far away it might be.

And I didn’t have the luxury of being able to afford a dragon ride just yet.

I was just about to offer to pay for just the strips when Sadie looked back at the owner and then gestured for me to come closer.

“Just pay for the strips, okay?” she whispered. “And when I’m done ringing you out, come around back.”

I nodded and said nothing further, feeling like a good co-conspirator. Sadie smiled as she took my single bronze opal and then produced a bag with the strips inside.

“Have a good day, Kevin,” she said, her eyes glimmering with mischief.

“You too, Sadie.”

I didn’t look at the dragon on the way out, mostly because I knew I had a terrible poker face. Instead, I left the main doors and booked it around to the backside of the building. I passed a stall of two little gnomes selling hand-stitched hats before arriving on the other side, where I saw Sadie waving to me from the backdoor.

In her hand was one of the pails of chlorine.

“Sadie, I can’t take this,” I said as she handled it over to me. “It’s not right. And I don’t want you to get in trouble.”

“It’s no trouble,” she said, her bouncy Southern accent bringing a smile to my face regardless. “These were damaged in transit. I can’t sell them because of the dent in the pail, see?”

I turned the pail around to see a big gash in the side, which had been covered up by generous helpings of tape.

“It might have lost a little chlorine because of what happened,” she said, making a tiny gesture with her fingers. “But most of it’s still there. And it will work in a pinch.”

“I’m desperate so I’ll take anything you can give me,” I said. “But are you sure it’s okay? Your boss doesn’t seem like the most generous guy.”

Sadie rolled her eyes at the mention of his name. “No, no, he’s not. This one is just our little secret, okay? Pinky swear?”

I laughed, mostly at seeing how such a uniquely Earth custom had somehow found its way to Dragonmont City.

“Pinky swear,” I confirmed. “Now we have to keep this secret until we die.”

Sadie giggled. “Better be for a long time!”

“Thank you, Sadie, seriously. This is the coolest, and I can’t tell you how thankful I am. And I know you made two girls back at home really happy with this too.”

“I bet they will be,” she said with a genuine smile. “Just send me an invite when you get the tub up and running, okay?”

“I know exactly where to find you!”

Sadie’s gaze lingered just a little too long on me before she nodded. “You better git going. Before I try to give you more free stuff!”

“I’m sure I’ll be back soon. Thank you, Sadie! I’m glad I met you!”

“Likewise, Kevin. Likewise!”

Chapter Nine

By the time I got back to the duplex, it was around the middle of the afternoon. I was still drenched in sweat, but only part of that could be blamed on the heat of the day.

The other part could definitely be blamed on Sadie. I was still having visions of that green goddess prancing around the store, her cleavage bursting out of that tiny bikini top.

I had no problems understanding just what Paulina and Kennedi were talking about. There was just something magical about goblin girls. I was so hooked that I didn't know if I could look at anyone else again. Certainly not another human woman.

I was crushing on all three goblin girls at the same time, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

As I arrived on the rooftop terrace, I could see that the water had warmed up to seventy-two degrees. It was making progress, and as I listened to the hum of the jets, I could tell everything was running smoothly.

Before the water was ready to enter though, I needed to make sure the chemicals were just right. I pulled out my newly-acquired test strips and gave one a swipe through the water.

Right away, the blocks of all four tests changed to separate colors. I held the strip up to the back of the bottle, where there was a key, and compared my results.

Surprisingly, most of it looked great. The pH and alkalinity were within range, albeit maybe a little on the low side. I could fix that with the chemicals downstairs. There wasn't a reading for the chlorine, which made sense since I hadn't put any in yet.

The biggest thing I needed to change was the calcium level. My strip was only colored light blue when it should have been very dark blue. Looking at the levels, I guessed I'd need close to a full bottle to raise this very soft water to where it needed to be.

Once I reached the utility closet, I grabbed the pH and alkalinity bottles, intending to hit those first. I went to grab the calcium bottle too, and that's when I noticed my next problem.

I was not going to have enough calcium to raise the tub to appropriate levels. I spun the top off the bottle, seeing that I had maybe a quarter of the bottle left.

"Damnit, I should've checked this more closely," I muttered to myself.

It wasn't that big of an issue. Calcium was relatively cheap compared to chlorine, and I'd go back to the store if I had to, even if that meant going back today.

That also meant seeing Sadie again, which I was more than happy to do. She would probably think I was nuts coming back so soon, but the idea of listening to that sweet Southern accent had me halfway out the door already.

I decided to make do with what I had, and I returned to the tub to add in the chemicals. I turned the jets on and started with small amounts of pH and alkalinity, letting the jets cycle for fifteen minutes before I started with the calcium.

I measured bits of calcium, choosing to cycle the jets twice before I finished the entire bottle. Someone had once told me that it wasn't great for the pump to dump so many chemicals in at one time. I had no idea if that was true or not, but I still added chemicals in small bursts when I did a startup for the first time, and I never had any bad luck doing so.

By this time, it was getting late in the afternoon. I knew the girls would be home soon, and I wasn't surprised to hear the sound of feminine giggles coming from the terrace stairway. I had just tested the tub after using the last of my calcium when I saw Paulina and Kennedi, who were still wearing their maid outfits.

"Holy dragon balls!" swore Kennedi as she saw the tub. She raced over to me. "Kevin, you got the hot tub running again!"

"Almost as good as new," I said, not holding back my grin. "Just a couple things left I need to do, but we'll be ready to use it tomorrow."

Kennedi's smile fell. "Tomorrow? But I really want to use it tonight!"

I chuckled. "Put your hand in the water."

She gave me a weird look as Paulina approached my other side. Soon, Kennedi dipped her hand inside and then pulled it back out.

"So not exactly what I was picturing for a *hot* tub," she said, waving it dry.

"Yeah, it's only up to seventy-six degrees," I said. "You won't want to get in until it hits mid-nineties at the least. It'll take most of the night to warm up that much, but it's almost ready."

Kennedi looked ready to pout, when Paulina wrapped her arms around my side. "I can't tell you how wonderful this is. I gave up ever using this hot tub again, and you changed it around in less than a day. Has anyone told you lately how amazing you are?"

Now it was my turn to blush. Hearing Paulina's high praise definitely made the struggles of the day well worth it.

"I was hoping you'd be happy to see it running," I said. "This time with water that isn't stinky."

Kennedi plugged her nose playfully. "That was so terrible. And now it smells . . . chemical-ly."

"I just dumped a bunch in, but I have a little problem," I said, holding up the empty calcium bottle. "I have to run back to the store to get more."

"Run *back* to the store?" asked Paulina. "Since you've already been there?"

"Yeah," I said sheepishly. "I didn't realize the calcium bottle was so empty."

I didn't want to ask for more money, but I knew what I had left was going to be tight. Thankfully, Paulina seemed to sense where I was going with it, and to my surprise, she pulled out a few more bronze opals.

"Will this do the trick?" she asked, counting out about six more. "Sorry, I don't have much else."

"I think that will be more than enough," I said. "I got a really great deal on the stuff I purchased earlier, so I made what you gave me stretch as far as

possible.”

That was good enough for her and she passed it over without another word. I wondered if she was going to ask about the website, but she never broached the topic. She just looked absolutely tickled to see the hot tub in full operation.

“I need to pick which bikini I’m going to wear in here first!” said Kennedi, moving to sit on the outside of the shell while swinging her legs. I tried not to stare as her maid outfit rode up those gorgeous, green legs.

“Should I go with my leopard-print bikini?” she thought out loud. “Or maybe that one that’s purple to match my hair?”

Paulina laughed. “Let’s get something to eat so Kevin can finish up.” She then turned toward me. “You sure you don’t want dinner before you go back to the store?”

“I’ll catch up later,” I said. “I want to get there before they close.”

“Perfect,” she said. Then, to my amazement, Paulina reached up on her toes and kissed me gently. It wasn’t a passionate kiss, but it also wasn’t one that you gave to your grandma either.

I let my arms wrap around her as I kissed her again, and again, and again.

When we broke apart, I could see that Kennedi had put both her hands under her chin as she watched us.

“Please don’t mind me,” she teased. “Continue like I’m not even here!”

Both Paulina and I laughed. We kissed one more time before separating, much to Kennedi’s disappointment.

“I never get to see any action around here,” she pouted.

“Just be grateful that you saw me kissing anyone,” said Paulina with a giggle.

“This is true. Kevin has been a good influence on you. He’s getting you to come out of your shell slowly but surely.”

I thought Kennedi was onto something. Not that Paulina wasn’t guarded around me, but I was taking out chunks of that wall every time we talked, and I loved every second of getting to know her more.

Not to be outdone, Kennedi had one last parting gift before leaving the terrace with Paulina. She traced her finger along my jawline as she gave me a sultry look.

“I could use your help in picking those bikinis later,” she whispered. “If you’re up to it, that is.”

“There’s no other place I’d rather be than watching you slip into bikinis,” I said a little too honestly.

Kennedi grinned and kissed me. “What a lovely answer. See you later, hunky.”

With the girls going downstairs, I decided it was time for me to get moving too. I wasn’t sure what time the store closed, and I wanted to get this entirely crossed off the list today.

Traffic was heavier as I made my way back to the shopping plaza. I could see the streets mostly filled with business types, which seemed to include a lot of different elves and more than a handful of fairies as they either went home or out to eat for the evening. Most of the elves seemed pretty aloof, not paying attention to anyone else besides themselves, which seemed to fit with the picture I had of them as being a little more pretentious than the rest.

When I arrived at the store, I saw that I made it just in time. It wasn’t due to close for another ten minutes. I didn’t see any other patrons inside when I opened the door, but the first thing I noticed was the sounds of yelling.

I froze as I heard a male voice roaring from the back counter.

“You’re beyond useless, Sadie! And don’t think I didn’t notice that you gave away valuable product again! This is a business, not a charity!”

I winced, especially as I realized who the voice belonged to. Coming around the corner, I could see Sadie standing near the register, her hands planted against her jean shorts, staring back at the dragon owner.

The owner wasn’t done yet. His wings were flapping excitedly as he yelled. “I should have never hired you! You don’t belong here!”

I hadn’t meant to interrupt them, but listening to him chastise Sadie was just one bridge too far. I glared at him as I marched up to the counter.

“You don’t need to yell at her like that!” I said firmly.

The dragon coughed, sending flames spurting out of its nose. “And it looks like your little thief boyfriend is back! I want my chlorine back, you thief!”

“He didn’t take your chlorine, I did!” said Sadie, defending me. “And the pail was damaged, Mitch! We would have dumped it eventually.”

“I might have still sold it if you hadn't given it away,” he grumbled, coughing again.

“No, you wouldn’t,” replied Sadie before pointing at me. “And don’t you know better than to call one of our customers a thief? I already know you missed the Ethics 101 course, but did you skip Business 101 too?”

“Why, you smart-mouthed little bit—”

Before he could finish the sentence, Sadie threw a filter at him. It bounced harmlessly off his scaly chest.

“I quit,” she said. “I’m not working for you any longer. You’re an ass, Mitch. I tried to give you the benefit of the doubt, but everyone was right about you.”

“Fine, quit!” he roared, flapping his wings again. “Take your boyfriend with you! And good luck trying to get a new job around here. I know every owner in this plaza, lady!”

I couldn’t have been more disgusted with the scene in front of me. The last thing I was thinking about was buying anything else here. I saw Sadie marching off for the entrance as her eyes started to turn red, stopping to grab a shirt to throw over her bikini top before she left.

Needless to say, I followed, wanting to make sure she was alright.

She went crashing through the door, nearly taking it off the hinges as she stormed down the sidewalk. Sadie didn’t stop marching for three blocks, finally finding a bench outside the plaza to sit down on. When she stopped, I could see that her eyes were welled up with tears.

I didn’t know if she would want to see me after what just happened. I felt guilty in a strange sort of way, like I was responsible for the fact that she didn’t have a job.

I was beginning to wonder if I was cursed. Was no goblin girl safe in their job when I was around?

Either way, I couldn't stop myself from sitting down next to her. "Sadie, I'm so sorry about that."

She shook her head furiously. "Fuck him, you know? He's such an asshole. I knew someone who worked for him before, and I talked to her right before I got the job. She said he was a dick and I should keep looking for work, but I was desperate. I still need to pay for college, and I decided to take it anyway. Stupid, stupid decision."

"You can't blame yourself for that," I said. "I know what it's like to not have much money. It sucks. You find yourself forced into doing stuff that you otherwise wouldn't even think of. It's not your fault for taking a job that you needed to pay for school."

"Ugh, it just makes me so frustrated!" she said. "And for him to treat a customer like that. Unbelievable!"

"I can definitely say I won't be purchasing my calcium increaser here," I said lightheartedly.

At least that made her smile.

"Yeah, fuck him," said Sadie, wiping away a tear.

"I'm going to pass on that, but at least you never have to deal with him again."

Sadie giggled. "That's true. And I didn't mean that literally."

"I know, I just wanted to have some fun with you. I didn't want to see you cry anymore. You look much prettier with a smile on, you know?"

Sadie turned toward me. "You really think I'm pretty? You're not just messin' with me?"

"I think the sight of you in a bikini top is enough for me to buy the whole row of hot tubs," I replied. "If only I had the money to do it with!"

Sadie blushed a deep green color. "That's really sweet of you. You're not the only one with money problems unfortunately."

“You’re right, but at least you’re going to school. You’re going to get a degree and leave this store far behind. What are you studying if you don’t mind me asking?”

“Computer science,” replied Sadie before putting up her hands. “I know, I know. I’ve heard every joke in the book about goblin girls in IT, but I actually like the problem-solving aspect of it. It puts me in such a pickle though. I don’t graduate for another year, and I have no idea what I’m going to do to pay for these last two semesters. I guess it’s back to hunting for a job.”

I hadn’t replied yet because I was still in a state of shock. It was that feeling of excitement that happened when the universe threw you a bone, when you had the chance to solve multiple problems with one move.

I was determined not to ignore it. Maybe this was fate?

“Sadie, have you ever dabbled in website design?” I asked, feeling my heart in my throat. “I know computer science is kind of an umbrella topic, but just thought I’d ask.”

Sadie shrugged. “I know the basics if that’s what you’re asking. I designed my big sister’s wedding website. I had to learn as I went but it didn’t look crappy when I was finished with it.”

Now I was getting excited. And it wasn’t because of Sadie’s incredible beauty.

Okay, maybe part of me still was. But this was something new.

“I think I know a way that I can help you,” I said. “I’m in desperate need of a website designer for our business. I haven’t had much luck so far but maybe this is the break I needed?”

“So you got me fired from my job so you could give me a new one?” asked Sadie, shooting me side-eye before elbowing me in the side. “I’m just jokin’.”

“I’ve got to have you meet Paulina,” I said. “She’s my boss and the owner of Goblin Girl Maid Service, and she would be the one who would ultimately pay you. If you’re willing, I could take you to meet her right now?”

“I’m interested,” said Sadie before wiping away tears again. “But I look like a mess right now, and I’m starving. Do you think she would be okay with meeting tomorrow?”

“I think that would be more than fine,” I said. “Here’s our address. Come by in the morning?”

“Okay, that sounds great,” said Sadie before taking a deep breath. “Whew, I didn’t think that finding a new gig would be that easy.”

“Hopefully, we can pay you what you need,” I said. “We’re not exactly raking in the money, but I know we can pay you something. It’s the least I could do after what happened today.”

Sadie put her hand on my shoulder. “Don’t feel bad about that, really. This needed to happen. I always knew it was going to come to a head with Mitch, so I don’t feel that torn up about it. Once the shock wears off, I’ll be okay.”

“I’ll still find a way to make it up to you,” I said. “I promise!”

Sadie grinned. “You’re a good guy, Kevin. No matter what happens tomorrow, I’m glad you stopped in to buy chlorine today.”

“Me too, Sadie, me too.”

Chapter Ten

I WAS FEELING ecstatic as I made the walk back to the duplex. Not because I cost someone else their job, but because I felt like I was already on the path to making it right.

As soon as I arrived home, I told the girls all about my encounter with Sadie, and they were very receptive about the chance to work with her.

“You had me at goblin girl,” said Kennedi as took a long sip of a local beer called Leprechaun Pale Ale. “I mean, how could she not be awesome? Look at us. We’re pretty freaking awesome.”

Paulina laughed while rolling her eyes. “I’ll be happier once she quotes us. Is there any chance we can see her work?”

“She said she did one already for her older sister,” I said. “So I’m sure she can pull it up for us tomorrow.”

“And then we’ll have the most kick-ass website in all of Dragonmont City,” said Kennedi, pumping her fist. “We’ll have to beat the fairies away from our business!”

“I’d settle for just paying the bills first,” said Paulina before glancing at me. “But I’m glad you found her too. I’m going to be cautiously optimistic about this.”

Kennedi blew a raspberry. “Screw cautiously optimistic. Let’s have a party!”

We both laughed at Kennedi, who couldn’t have been more opposite from Paulina. Sometimes I wondered how the two managed to stay friends when they were so different.

Still, there were times when they could complete each other’s sentences, so I knew it had to work out somehow.

“You can have your party,” said Paulina as she stood up from the dinner table. “But I have work to do. I really should check the forum again.”

“Forum schmorum, let loose for the night,” implored Kennedi. “Paulina, you’re too tightly wound up. You need to let it loose before you explode.”

Paulina smiled sadly, and I could see just how much tension she was carrying in her shoulders. The business weighed heavily on her, and any desire to cut loose for a night was quickly overwhelmed by her own responsibilities.

“Some other time,” promised Paulina. “Maybe when the website’s done?”

“Don’t bet on it,” grumbled Kennedi.

Paulina approached the sink to put her dishes away, and I hopped out of my chair to approach her.

“I think Kennedi might have a point,” I said. “I don’t think she’s proposing that we all get drunk and blitzed out of our mind, but maybe some fun would help?”

“I think drunk and blitzed is exactly what Kennedi had in mind,” said Paulina with a giggle. “But I know what you’re saying. I feel . . . guilty though.”

“I promise you there’s nothing to feel guilty about,” I said. “Have fun with us?”

I could tell she was on the fence but her sense of responsibility was too strong. With the business not going well, she couldn’t allow herself the night off.

“Rain check?” she asked, glancing at me sheepishly. “We’ll do this another night.”

“I’m holding you to that,” I said, thrusting out my hand. “We need to shake on it.”

Paulina held out her green hand, taking mine and squeezing. I continued to shake it for much longer than appropriate until she started to smile at me.

“I’m not letting go until you do,” I said, challenging her.

“Well, I’m not letting go either,” she said right back.

We started trying to pull each other, which quickly devolved into our own personal tug-of-war in the kitchen. Soon enough, I had Paulina laughing until the moment she let go of my hand.

“You cheated,” she accused. “You’re so much stronger than me.”

“No way. Besides, it’s not cheating when you straight up win.”

Paulina giggled. “I’m pretty sure that’s not how that actually works.”

I shrugged. “Close enough. Besides, I wanted you to have some fun tonight. Even if you can’t let loose, there are still people here that want to spend time with you. And they like you a lot too.”

“People like you?” she asked. “Because I already know Kennedi likes me.”

“Just like me,” I confirmed.

Paulina let out a long sigh as she appraised me silently. The smile melted off her face, giving me a long that was much hotter than what I expected.

I couldn’t help myself. Her lingering look of passion was making me hard. Quite honestly, there were very few things she could do that wouldn't turn me on.

Paulina just had that kind of effect on me.

“Thank you for thinking about me,” she said, leaning up on her toes to kiss me.

I didn’t let her escape so easily. I wrapped my arms around her back and pulled her close to me. Paulina moaned into my mouth while our tongues dueled together, not stopping until we were both breathless. By the time we were done, I was so hard that I was now pressing into her thigh.

She could definitely feel it, especially when she started to rub against me.

I thought I might have taken another big chunk out of her defenses, but I was reminded the wall was still standing moments later, when she pulled herself out of my arms reluctantly.

“Soon,” was the only thing she said. She didn’t need to explain any further than that. It was an entire conversation that took place in the space of one word.

“I’m looking forward to it,” I replied.

She gave me one last fiery look before disappearing from the kitchen, leaving me alone with Kennedi, who’d witnessed the entire thing.

“I thought you were really smooth for what it’s worth,” said Kennedi, taking another sip of her LPA. “If it were me, I would have fucked you.”

I laughed and rolled my eyes. “Come on, trouble, let’s have some fun.”

Her eyes sparkled. “Now you’re talking my language.”

Twenty minutes later found us at the start of our very first *Mario Kart* tournament.

“Okay, so here are the rules,” said Kennedi as she flopped down on the couch next to me. She’d taken the time to undress, putting on another tank top with spaghetti straps that was particularly booby. She had paired it with tiny gym shorts and a purple headband that matched the color of her hair. “First rule is no switching of characters for the entire race.”

“Why is that a rule?” I asked.

Kennedi sighed deeply. “Because it’s a consistency thing. You need to be ride or die with your *Mario Kart* driver. For example, I’m always the Princess. That never changes. Someone like me just couldn’t be Bowser, you know? It just doesn’t fit.”

“In the game or in real life?” I asked.

Kennedi grinned. “Both, but you know what I mean.”

“Okay, I’m more of a Yoshi guy myself,” I said. “What’s the second rule?”

“The second rule is that all course secrets are fair game,” she said. “The only thing that matters at the end of the race is the winner, not how she got there.”

“I think you mean ‘they.’”

“I know what I said,” quipped Kennedi. “Either way, you’re first or last, got it?”

“Fair enough, Ricky Bobby,” I said. “Any other rules?”

“Not really. We’ll play the best of seven races.”

“That all sounds fine,” I said, before looking at her sideways. “Care to make it interesting?”

“Ooo, what did you have in mind?”

“Well, I was thinking about how we talked about that naked dance yesterday,” I said, taking a moment to think about Kennedi slipping out of that tight tank top.

What a glorious image that was.

She put her hands together deviously. “I like where your head is going with this. But I think we should raise the stakes.”

I gulped hard. “How high do you want to go?”

“You ever play strip *Mario Kart*?”

I felt my cock lurch inside my shorts. There was nothing else I wanted to do more than play strip *Mario Kart* with Kennedi.

“I think I’m familiar with that,” I said, trying to play it cool.

Kennedi smacked my arm and then turned toward me, giving me another glorious cleavage shot. “How should we play it? Loser of the race takes off an article of clothing?”

I looked down at myself to see what I was wearing. I only had on a simple shirt from some goblin band, as well as my briefs and a pair of shorts. The clothes weren’t mine, but they came from Kennedi’s brother, who’d gained about a hundred pounds and didn’t need them anymore.

“I’m only wearing three things though,” I said.

Kennedi grinned. “Better not lose in three races or I’ll see your wiener then.”

Honestly, that sounded exactly like what I wanted. I didn’t mind losing a few races, but I was going to make Kennedi lose a few too.

“How much clothing do you have on?” I asked.

Kennedi glanced down at her cleavage. “Just this tank top, my fuzzy shorts, and a thong. Oh, and my headband. That counts, right?”

“I should say no, but the less clothes you wear, the harder it’s going to be for me to win.”

“Maybe that’s been my plan all along,” she said slyly. “Maybe I’m going to take a dive on the first few courses to pull out an easy victory?”

“If that’s your strategy, I don’t think I’m going to care about losing at that point,” I said with a little too much honesty.

Kennedi laughed next to me. “This is why we both like you so much. You make me feel . . . desired. You might not be the smoothest guy in the world, but I can tell you like us.”

“I like you a lot,” I admitted. “Paulina too.”

“The feeling is mutual,” she said, tracing a finger up my bare leg. “Now, how about that race?”

“You’re so on,” I said. “Pick the first track?”

“Already one step ahead of you, baby,” she said as we moved to the course list. “Something nice and simple to begin with.”

“No Mario Circuit tonight,” I said. “Let’s make this a challenge.”

“You asked for it,” she said, highlighting Banshee Boardwalk. “Hope you’re ready to strip!”

She might have been confident about her chances, but I was secretly very pleased about her decision to pick Banshee Boardwalk.

As a kid, it was one of my favorite tracks. I’d always liked the ghost theme, and I’d spent more time playing that track than just about any other.

If there was one race I could win, it was going to be this one.

We started off the race with Kennedi quickly going into first place with me hot on her heels. Of course, it didn’t take long for her to start shit-talking me.

“How about a little banana?” she asked, dropping one on me right at the moment when the fish jumped over the track. “Sorry, I couldn’t resist!”

“I’m so going to get you back for that,” I said, staying in second place as we headed for the castle. This part here was where my talent was going to shine. So many people flew off the track where it turned not once but twice in quick succession, and I noticed that Kennedi had to slow down just to make the turn.

“Hey, what the fuck?” she swore when I blew by her to take the lead.

“What’s wrong? I thought you were good at this track?”

I heard Kennedi grunt beside me and the race became more heated. She tried to red-shell me on the second lap, but a quick turn around the corner stopped it from happening. By the time I hit the third lap, the race was as good as mine.

Not even a blue shell right before the finish line could stop me. I blew past the black and white stripes and thrust my arms in the air like a champion.

“Oh, boo,” said Kennedi, more miffed than I expected. “You weren’t supposed to win that.”

“Maybe I’ve been secretly practicing all day while you worked?”

“*Or* maybe you just got lucky.”

I looked down at her body, wondering which piece of clothing she was going to discard. “I feel pretty lucky alright.”

Kennedi giggled and stood up in front of me. Her hips started to sway back and forth while my mouth watered, and I was transfixed by the way the tight fabric of her gym shorts swelled over her luscious curves.

My cock lurched in my shorts when she grabbed the hem of her tank top. “What piece of clothing should I lose first, hmm?”

She started to roll the top upward, revealing miles of tantalizing green stomach. My mouth was watering as I watched her abs come into view. She stopped for a moment before she reached her tits. With a quick move, she rolled the fabric back down over her stomach and then reached for her headband, shooting it into my lap.

“First piece of clothing,” she said with a coy giggle.

“That is so not fair,” I said once I caught my breath.

Kennedi fluttered her eyelashes. “I do believe you said the headband counted as a piece of clothing, good sir.”

Shit. She had me at that. But now I had to take my single win and turn it into a streak.

“And what track should we race now?” she asked. “Victor’s choice.”

That was an easy decision for me. I needed to keep my streak going, and I knew just the course to do that.

“Wario Stadium,” I replied. “Let’s do this.”

I could see a fierce glint in her eye. “You are *so* on!”

To my surprise, I won Wario Stadium quite easily. I took the lead early on and stayed there, mostly as Kennedi had a bad showing. I would have thought she was throwing the race, but I could tell she was frustrated when she couldn’t get back into first easily.

“Oh, hell,” she said, tossing her controller down and pouting by crossing her arms in front of her heavy breasts. “You cheated.”

I started laughing. “Maybe we need to race for higher stakes more often? I think it makes me perform better.”

Kennedi licked her lips as she looked down at her body. “So what piece of clothing should I lose next?”

“Can I tempt you into losing that tank top?”

She grinned and shook her head. “Not yet. You have to earn that first. I think I’ll just shimmy out these shorts first.”

I watched as the fuzzy material lowered down her long, green legs. Kennedi grabbed them off the floor and tossed them against my face playfully.

“Try not to stare too much now,” she teased.

That was going to be incredibly hard. She’d mentioned she was wearing a thong underneath, but she’d left out that it was fire-engine red and made of lace.

Not to mention, it was *tiny*. So tiny that it was barely there.

She turned toward me and fluttered her eyelashes when she saw me staring. “I certainly *hope* you’ll be able to keep winning now, Kevin.”

I didn’t like my chances. Kennedi was so smoldering hot that *Mario Kart* was going to become a sideshow very quickly if I didn’t focus.

The next two races did not go my way. I kept things relatively close during Royal Raceway, but I completely choked on DK’s Jungle Parkway. It was so bad that Kennedi was still doing her victory dance by the time I finished.

“Stupid drawbridge,” I grumbled. “I hate when I miss the entrance.”

“That sounds like a newb problem to me,” joked Kennedi. “But I do believe it’s time for you to strip!”

My two losses had netted me the loss of my shorts and my shirt. I tossed the shirt in Kennedi’s face just like she’d done with her shorts earlier.

“Hey, ironic,” she said, looking at my shirt. “This band is playing right now.”

I tuned out the *Mario Kart* music for a second to listen to the music she had softly playing. It sounded like heavy metal.

“I wouldn’t have taken you for a heavy metal fan, Kennedi.”

“Are you for real?” she asked, jerking her head to the music. “Besides, goblin music is every bit as good as human music. If not better.”

“Not that you’re biased or anything,” I joked. “But I’m surprised this is goblin music.”

“What did you expect goblin music to be? Polka and steel drums or something?”

I shrugged. “I just expected it to sound like it was out of the *Lord of the Rings* soundtrack. The good *Lord of the Rings*, by the way. Not the crappy Amazon one.”

Kennedi gave me a shocked look. “There’s a remake of it?”

“Don’t get too excited. It’s terrible.”

I was down to my underwear, which meant I really couldn't lose the next race. The score was tied 2-2, and we had at least two more races to go. The only saving grace I had was that Kennedi's options for clothing were very limited too.

If she lost the next race, I was definitely going to see some skin. My cock lurched in my boxers, creating a tent that I'm sure she noticed.

"Hmm, what should I pick now?" she said. "What course should I kick your ass in next?"

I watched as she hovered over Bowser's Castle. She shot me a grin.

"Don't worry," she teased. "I won't push you into the lava. *Hard*."

I gripped my controller with new determination. "If I win, you're so losing your tank top."

"If you win," she said, practically singing the words. "But you won't."

When the light went green, I shot out to an early lead while Kennedi stayed glued to my butt. It wasn't my favorite course, mostly because I always got fucked when I got to the room with the sliding Thwomps. For some reason, I usually messed this up and ran into them, which was exactly what happened here.

"Looks like someone's losing his briefs tonight!" said Kennedi.

I needed a second wind more than anything. Thankfully, things started to go my way. I got the fabled blue shell and nailed her right as she started the second lap. Her luck disappeared at that point, getting crushed by Thwomp before I was able to take the lead by the time we made it to the courtyard outside.

"No, no, no," muttered Kennedi. "Slow down!"

I grinned as I heard her panicking. I started the third lap in the lead, and my only hope was to keep it. I narrowly avoided going into the lava as I jump-braked around the corner. One glance at Kennedi's screen told me she was hot on my heels.

If she got a red shell right now, I was toast.

My luck held.

“No! Not a crappy banana,” she moaned right before we took the last turn.

When I raced across the finish line, I threw my hands in the air to celebrate. I didn’t expect Kennedi to join me, but she was oddly quiet as the race finished.

When I glanced at her again, I could see that her fingers were teasing the hem of her tank top.

“I guess a win is a win,” she said simply, giving me a coy look as she started to raise the hem over her body.

This time was so much better than the first. Kennedi exposed all that delicious skin underneath, but she didn’t stop at her tits. I watched as they fell out of her tank top, taking me to full hardness within a matter of seconds.

She looked so sexy that I almost forgot about *Mario Kart* completely. Her tits were delightfully full and perky, sitting high on her chest. Tits that large shouldn’t defy gravity like they did, but they were a wonderful match for her defiant personality.

I could see that each nipple was hard, and more than anything I just wanted to reach over to touch her. When my eyes flickered up to hers, I could tell Kennedi was enjoying the attention.

“See anything you like?” she whispered with a sultry tone.

“You are so fucking hot that I can barely stand it,” I muttered, feeling silly about how it sounded once it was out.

Kennedi didn’t mind. She must have thought it was cute because she traced a line down her tits until she stopped to pinch her nipple, letting out a moan in the process.

“Are you going to have trouble concentrating now?” she asked.

I nodded like a bobblehead. “Oh, yes.”

She grinned and picked up her controller. “Perfect. Next course please!”

I wasn’t sure how I did it, but I tore my eyes off her perfectly-formed chest with the utmost reluctance. Suddenly, *Mario Kart* didn’t seem so

interesting anymore. I picked a track absentmindedly, only realizing that I picked Toad's Turnpike after I did it.

"Fancy a ride on the turnpike?" mocked Kennedi. "I hope you're prepared to lose."

That was exactly what happened. I didn't just lose the race.

I got demolished.

It was my fault. I kept seeing her hard nipples in my peripheral vision. I'd challenge anyone to win a race like that when you had a mostly naked goblin girl sitting next to you.

Once Kennedi won the race, there was only one thing left for me to do.

She held out her hand as she grinned at me lewdly. "Your briefs please, good sir?"

Chapter Eleven

I TRIED to play it cool as I reluctantly hooked my fingers around the sides of my briefs. This was about to be a first for me.

I'd never played naked *Mario Kart* before. Maybe this was what I'd been missing out on all along?

I didn't expect Kennedi to have much of a reaction, but that all changed the moment my hard cock slipped out of my briefs.

"Holy crap," whispered Kennedi from right next to me.

I handed her my briefs, but she didn't take them. When I turned to look at her, Kennedi's eyes were fixed on my cock. It was like she was in some kind of trance. Her mouth was wide open like she'd never seen something more interesting in her life.

Or possibly more erotic.

I was a little embarrassed by being fully nude in front of her for the first time so I tried to tuck it down, but Kennedi grabbed my arm before I could complete the motion.

"No, no," she said quickly. "Don't do that. Leave it out. Leave it be. Just fucking leave it."

I could tell the shoe was on the other foot. As mesmerized as I was by her tits, Kennedi seemed to have the same reaction about my cock.

I wondered how I could have a little fun with this?

Grabbing the shaft, I gave it a slow jerk up and down. Kennedi moaned as she watched.

"See anything you like?" I mimicked, turning the tables on her.

Her tongue darted out to lick her upper lip. She nodded without saying a word.

"Do you want to touch it?" I asked.

Kennedi exhaled slowly as her eyes locked on mine. "Yeah? Touch it? Touch your . . . cock?"

I nodded. I was so hard that I could make out every vein in my shaft. More than anything, I wanted her to grab it and never let go. When she extended her hand, I realized I was holding my breath.

It was my turn to groan as her green hand wrapped around the shaft. I could feel every nerve ending in my cock as Kennedi squeezed it slowly, moving up and down as she explored me. I figured turnabout's fair play, and seeing that her nipples were still painfully hard, I raised my hand to cup her bare breast.

Kennedi let out a full-body shudder. “Oh fuck-fuck-fuck,” she whispered as we touched each other.

“Feel good?” I muttered as I rolled her nipple between my fingers.

“Mhmm,” she whimpered, stroking me. “So good. So hard. So *thick*.”

For several long minutes, we continued to explore each other. Kennedi’s strokes got even quicker, to the point that it was like she was trying to make me cum. My hands weren’t idle either, teasing her nipples until at one point I slid my hand down her belly until it rested on the outside of her thong.

Kennedi whimpered again as I started to rub her clit. I could feel her legs squeezing around mine, and there was nothing I wanted more than to remove that last remaining strip of thin fabric.

I still don’t know how we did it, but it was a testament to self-restraint that explained why we were able to take our hands off each other to finish the race.

“Let’s get this over with,” said Kennedi quickly, grabbing her controller. “One last race.”

“One last race,” I agreed, wanting to finish this so we could get to other more important, more *steamy* matters.

“You pick,” said Kennedi. “Quickly.”

I scanned the list and settled on the course we started the previous night. “For all the money? Yoshi Valley?”

Kennedi’s head bobbed as she stole another glance at my cock. “You better win.”

I took that as a personal challenge as the race started. Even with the high stakes, the seventh and final race wasn't the big showdown that I expected.

We were simply too distracted by each other. We were too hot, and it bled through to our racing.

I couldn't count how many mistakes I made. I ran off the cliff several times and even got crushed by the giant egg at the end.

Despite my numerous mistakes, Kennedi wasn't doing any better, and by the time I crossed the finish line, she threw her controller as she crawled into my lap, kissing me with every ounce of passion she had.

My hands were on her instantly. I had just a taste of her earlier, but now I wanted to drown myself with all things Kennedi. We kissed until our lips hurt and then we still kept kissing.

I could feel her massive breasts pressing into my chest, her nipples leaving small indents in the skin. Below the waist, Kennedi straddled me, and I could feel the way my shaft was rubbing against the thin fabric of her thong.

I could even feel the heat from between her legs.

If we stayed like this for most of the night, I wouldn't have complained. This was as close to heaven as I'd been, but Kennedi had other plans, especially when I noticed the wicked grin on her face.

It began when she stopped kissing my lips and started moving south. She planted kisses against my chin, my jaw, and finally my neck as I cupped her firm tits and played with her nipples as she moaned in approval.

She didn't stop at my neck though. Her kisses came down across my chest. She teased my nipple before continuing down my stomach.

I sucked in air when she reached her destination. We were so hot for each other that she didn't even think to tease me first.

No, Kennedi just enveloped my shaft right from the start.

"Fuck me," I groaned as she started to bob up and down on my cock. It was like a dream that I didn't want to end. Seeing that beautiful purple-haired siren with her lips wrapped around me was a testament to just how good life can be.

If I had any doubts about being reborn, I lost them right then and there.

Kennedi was amazing at sucking me, so much so that I lost any coherent thoughts that went beyond my need to cum. A very primal mindset took over, and all I could think about was giving her my cum, claiming her as my own.

I started to thrust my hips, not so much letting the blow job happen to me but becoming more active. I was now fucking her mouth, which was only making Kennedi moan louder. Her saliva was pooling around my shaft, turning shiny white since it was mixed with my precum.

My eyes rolled to the back of my head. It was the best head I'd ever received, with Kennedi maintaining just the right amount of suction and spit.

I was going to cum. And I was going to cum *hard*.

"Gonna cum," I said finally, barely getting the words out before I felt my balls tighten.

Kennedi latched down on my cock and slid all the way to the base, deepthroating me right as I started to unload in her throat.

It was intense enough that I nearly blacked out. I unloaded so much cum into her mouth that I don't know how she took it all down. Kennedi didn't miss a single drop. She swallowed it all before cleaning my shaft and grinning at me like I'd just given her the tastiest treat in the world.

"I need more," she said, clearly still hot as she started to rub her pussy. "I need to be fucked by your cock, baby."

Somehow, despite having the most intense orgasm in living memory, I was still throbbing hard. Maybe there was something to the whole idea that goblin girls and human men were perfect mates.

Either way, I didn't care. I just needed to slide inside this beautiful green woman who was rubbing her clit in front of me.

"Get over here," I growled, surrendering to the sheer heat of the moment.

Kennedi stood up and sat down on the couch, but she propped herself up so that she could lean over the armrest. In the process, her magnificent ass

raised into the air. I could see her pussy was absolutely drenched, with a bead of cream about to drip down from her clit.

I moved behind her, grabbing my shaft and aiming the tip for that cream before it could fall against the couch. Kennedi moaned when I made contact with her clit, and I felt her shudder when my hand fell against her ass.

I could feel the heat of her body beckoning me forward, and as soon as I placed the tip against her pussy, I pushed in while Kennedi pushed back.

For the rest of my life, I'll remember that first time I slid inside a goblin girl. It was the hottest, snuggest, wettest pussy that I've ever been in. It was like it was tailor-made for my cock, being designed to offer the maximum amount of pleasure.

It was beyond intoxicating. I was flat-out *addicted* to being inside her. Under me, I could feel that Kennedi was having a similar reaction when she moaned loudly.

"Sweet mother fairy, that's deep!" she yelled once I'd bottomed out. She whipped her head around, glancing at me with a mixture of shock and adoration. "Your cock. So perfect. So *deep*."

I knew she liked it, but I didn't know just how much she liked it until my third full stroke, when Kennedi surprised me by having her first orgasm. I couldn't blame her for how fast she came. Despite just cumming myself, I could feel the stirrings of another orgasm on the way already.

All the strength went out of her body when she came, collapsing against the side of the couch. I thought to give her a minute to recover, but Kennedi quickly waved her hand, gesturing for me to continue.

"Don't stop. Don't ever stop," she whimpered. "Keep going. Fuck me. Fuck me hard. Fuckkk, I'm yours!"

I drove into her, plundering that sweet pussy like my life depended on it. I just wanted to get deeper. I wanted to make Kennedi cum over and over again, to the point that she had trouble remembering her own name.

It wasn't that hard to do. Ten minutes later, there was a puddle of juices under us. Kennedi was still moaning, but she wasn't making any sense. I

thought I'd fucked her comatose, but I still managed to pick up a familiar word or two every minute.

But there was one phrase I heard more than the others—"don't stop."

I didn't think I could even if I wanted to. This amazing goblin girl under me had me just as addicted to her body as she was to mine. My balls still felt heavy, like I had another thick load of cum to give her.

That would be some kind of record, but I wasn't about to start questioning the way things worked in this fantasy world.

I gripped Kennedi's ass hard as my world started to turn black. Before I knew it, we were both cumming. Her body shuddered as I pumped out another thick load of cream, this time directly inside her pussy.

The feeling was so intense that I couldn't possibly begin to describe it. I felt like an eternity passed as my cock continued to unload into Kennedi, all the while I kept a tight grip on her ass. When we finally came back down from our shared high, we were sweaty, lightheaded, and entirely exhausted.

I fell back against the couch, feeling the leather against my sticky skin. Kennedi came with me, looking like she'd just been fucked to within an inch of her life.

Which, in all fairness, was probably pretty accurate.

"Well, it's official," she said after several quiet moments.

"What's official?"

"Two t-things," she said, holding up shaky fingers. "This is the best day of my life. And now I'm officially addicted to your cock."

"Those don't sound like bad things at all," I said, wrapping my arm around her.

"Not even close," she said, before realizing the game was still on, though stuck on the start screen. "Who won by the way?"

I started laughing until I was joined by her seconds later.

I had to agree with her on that one—it really was one of the best days ever.

Chapter Twelve

WAKING UP THE NEXT MORNING, I felt ready to conquer the world. Mostly it was because I still had Kennedi in my arms.

At some point, we'd moved to her bed, but it was already well into the night when that happened. The only thing I do remember was how soft her body felt pressed into mine, like it was meant to be there in the first place.

I also remembered how I had woken up to find her lips wrapped around my cock. That was certainly the cherry on top of a lovely wake-up.

For now though, Kennedi had gone back to sleep. The sun was just starting to rise, and I hopped out of bed without waking her. I needed some coffee, and judging by the smell that hit my nose the second I walked into the hallway, I could tell someone had already beaten me to it.

I found Paulina in the kitchen already nursing her cup. She was wearing her usual satin pajamas and her dark-rimmed glasses, reading something at the table.

I'd always heard that the secret to finding a woman you could spend the rest of your life with was making sure you liked the way she looked when she first woke up in the morning. In this case, seeing Paulina even when she wasn't ready to walk out that front door still made my heart thunder like crazy.

Especially when she smiled at me.

"Good morning, sunshine!" she called out, putting down the book she was reading. She took a long sip of her mug while I made one for myself, sitting down next to her.

"Morning," I said, before yawning. Spending most of the night up with Kennedi had me still half-asleep.

"What's the matter?" asked Paulina, grinning at me like someone who had a secret to tell. "Didn't get much sleep last night? Too much *Mario Kart*? Burning the midnight oil? Pulled an all-nighter?"

"That's way too many euphemisms for how early it is," I said, letting out another yawn.

She giggled. “It just sounded to me like you had a *lovely* evening.”

At that point, I froze. I remembered how loud Kennedi had been during sex, and Paulina’s room wasn’t far away.

No wonder she was looking at me like the cat that ate the canary.

I started to stammer out a response when Paulina put her hands up. “I’m just teasing you, Kevin. Actually, I’m a little jealous about the whole thing.”

“Jealous? Really?”

“Of course,” she said demurely. “I’ve known Kennedi all my life. That’s not the first time I’ve heard her sound like that. Well, maybe not like *that*. It was beyond obvious that no one’s going to be topping that performance anytime soon.”

I couldn’t help myself. I turned a deep shade of red, mostly as I relived the previous night.

“Anyway, I’m really happy that you two had a great time,” said Paulina, her eyes twinkling. “And maybe someday really soon, you can show me what all the fuss is about.”

I coughed on my coffee, spilling some on the table while Paulina giggled.

“Yeah?” I asked finally. “You really mean that?”

Paulina leaned over and kissed me deeply enough that she moaned in my mouth.

“Oh yeah,” she confirmed. “That’s okay, right?”

I answered her by kissing her back. I had her laughing by the time I was done, kissing all over lips, chin, and finally neck. I probably would have kept going, especially when Paulina started to whimper in approval, but the doorbell rang.

I growled. “Some people just have no sense of timing.”

“Or maybe they do. Will you see who our early morning visitor is?”

“Of course.”

I made my way to the front door and threw it open, already prepared to launch into a scathing rebuke of whichever door-to-door salesmen had shown up so early.

But before I could say a word, I saw the pretty blue eyes and auburn-red hair of Sadie staring back at me.

“Heya, Kevin!”

“You are so not who I thought was going to be at the door,” I said.

Sadie frowned. “Is it too early? Sorry, I knew I should’ve waited until later!”

I started to laugh and grabbed her arm. “No worries, I’m glad to see you. Come in and let me introduce you to Paulina.”

The worried look disappeared from her face as she took a few steps into the duplex. I was a little disappointed that she wasn’t wearing that little bikini top from yesterday, but she still managed to take my breath away with the tiny pink camisole she was wearing. The top of it was resting over another pair of jean shorts, but this pair was just a little bit more modest than the pair she was wearing yesterday.

“This is a really nice place!” said Sadie, looking around. “I just live in a tiny studio so I’m not used to this much space.”

“I just moved in,” I replied. “But I love it here. Not only the space, but the people who live here. Speaking of, here’s Paulina.”

I brought Sadie into the kitchen, where Paulina was waiting for her, making quick introductions between the two goblin girls.

“I can’t tell you how happy we are to meet you,” gushed Paulina. “Especially someone who’s willing to help us with a website without charging us a small fortune.”

“I just hope you like my work,” said Sadie. “I’m not a professional, but I think I can make something y'all will like. Please don’t take this the wrong way, but it’s not going to take much to make a better website than what you have already.”

Paulina looked a little embarrassed. “Yeah, no offense taken. I’m more than willing to admit that I’m not very good at it.”

“Not to worry, I have several ideas of how we can make it look totally kick-ass,” said Sadie brightly. “Oh, one more thing before I forget.”

Sadie opened the bag she was carrying and produced a small bottle, which she handed to me.

“Calcium increaser?” I asked, reading the label. I started to smile. “Sadie, you’re the coolest!”

She laughed softly. “It only dawned on me last night that you had to go home empty-handed from the store. My neighbors have a hot tub that I take care of for them, and they are always well-stocked on chemicals. I told them I’d replace it for them another time, so they were more than fine with me borrowing it.”

“Does this mean we’ll be able to get in today?” asked Paulina.

“Definitely,” I replied. “I mean, if you want to be technical about it, this isn’t needed to get inside, especially since it’s sanitized and up to temperature. It just helps to take care of the pump and make it last longer.”

“I can’t wait to go in!” said Paulina with some excitement as she clapped her hands together. “I can’t believe you got it ready so quickly!”

“Got what ready so quickly?”

We all turned to see Kennedi making a late entrance into the kitchen. She was wearing the same shirt that I had on last night, the one with the goblin band, and her hair was a little disheveled. She looked like she had a very late night, and I wondered if I had a similar look to me when Paulina saw me earlier.

Kennedi hadn’t noticed Sadie yet because she grabbed her forehead and groaned.

“I think I had my brains fucked into goo last night,” she said with a hoarse voice.

I prepared myself to introduce Sadie to Kennedi but it turned out that I didn’t have to.

They already knew each other.

“Oh my sweet stars! Kennedi? Is that you?” asked Sadie, her mouth dropping open.

Kennedi woke up in a hurry as she rushed over to the redheaded visitor. “Sadie! What in the world are you doing here?”

The two goblin girls hugged each other like long-lost friends, leaving Paulina and I with questioning looks on our faces.

“Wait, how do you two know each other? Do all goblins know each other here?”

“No, don’t be silly,” said Sadie while laughing. “But I knew Kennedi growing up.”

“Yeah, her family moved in only three houses down the street from us,” confirmed Kennedi. “We went to elementary school together.”

“And played together.”

“And played buckleball together!”

They hugged one more time before Sadie looked down at Kennedi’s lack of dress. “Wait a second. Kevin was wearing that band shirt yesterday. So you and Kevin, huh?”

Kennedi grinned shamelessly. “Oh yeah.”

“Was it good?”

“It was *very* good.”

Paulina giggled and elbowed my side. “You’re getting more popular by the second.”

It definitely appeared that way, especially with the way that Sadie was looking at me now.

The two old friends talked for the next twenty minutes as they attempted to get caught up on everything that had happened since they last saw each other, which sounded like it had been quite a number of years.

While they were talking, I asked Paulina if she knew Sadie but she admitted that she and Kennedi didn’t start getting closer until they were

both a little older, which ended up being after Sadie had moved out of Kennedi's neighborhood.

It was like they just missed each other, entering and exiting Kennedi's life at different points.

Their conversation would have continued for much longer had Kennedi not looked at the time.

"Ugh, I have to start getting ready," she said, pushing up from her chair. "Those penthouses aren't going to clean themselves."

Kennedi went to get changed, while I thought of something to show Sadie.

"Want to see the hot tub?" I asked. "You've been a big part of getting it up and running again. You ought to come check it out."

Sadie smiled. "Of course!"

The three of us made our way to the rooftop terrace. It was still early enough in the day that half of it was covered in shadows, but there was still plenty of light for us to see. I moved closer to the tub and took the cover off to showcase my work below.

"It looks great!" said Sadie before dipping her hand into the water. "Temperature looks great too. This is the tub that hadn't been used in years prior to yesterday?"

"Yeah, we're very lucky to have Kevin around," said Paulina, giving me a modest look. "His influence is already being felt all over the house."

"And this is the last thing that we need," I said, opening the bottle of calcium. I dumped a good bit of it inside, enough to bring it within range. I turned on the jets to let it cycle through while Sadie and Paulina started to discuss what was needed for the website.

Within fifteen minutes, the jets had turned off, and I grabbed a new test strip for the final results. I dipped it into the water and pulled it away quickly to take a look.

"Looks perfect to me," I said, beaming as I handed it over to Sadie. "But you're the expert. You tell me?"

Sadie took the strip and held it up to the rising sun so she could read it. In the process, her camisole rode up, exposing the bottom half of her toned tummy.

“You’re a master at this,” said Sadie, grinning as she handed it back to me. “I think I know who’s going to have a hot tub party tonight!”

“I really can’t wait,” said Paulina with some excitement. “I know just what I’m going to wear too!”

My visions were suddenly full of Paulina as she pranced around in the skimpiest bikini she could find. That totally wasn’t her style, but I still tried to picture it anyway, marveling at how turned on I became in just a quick period of time.

Living with goblin girls was like popping boner pills all day long. It was a permanent aphrodisiac.

By the time we finished up on the terrace, we went back downstairs so we could get Sadie set up in the office. Before that could happen, we ran into Kennedi in the kitchen, who’d changed into her black-and-white maid outfit.

Though I’d seen them both in their outfits many times by that point, there was something about her that made my eyes bulge that morning. I thought she might be showing a bit more cleavage than normal, or maybe the material was thinner, but I felt like I could see more of her tits than I was supposed to see.

Not that it was a complaint, but it did make it hard to focus on the website discussion.

“Okay, so do you want to get me to your computer?” Sadie asked Paulina. “I’m glad that you don’t mind that I don’t have my own laptop. The one I have at home is a real hunk of junk, and I’d desperately love to buy a new one. I just can’t afford it right now.”

“I don’t mind at all,” said Paulina. “It’s just this way. Let me show you. And can we see some of your work? Kevin mentioned a wedding website you made already?”

“Of course!” said Sadie. “The one I made for my big sis. Let me show you.”

I was prepared to follow Paulina when Kennedi got my attention. There was a weird look on her face as she beckoned me closer.

“Do you think you can help me reach something in my room?” asked Kennedi suddenly.

“Reach? Yeah, sure. What do you need help with?”

Kennedi didn’t answer. She just grabbed my hand and led me to her room, shutting the door firmly behind her.

I knew she had a high shelf in her closet, so I suspected she needed help getting something down. Either way, I started heading in that direction before she called my name.

When I turned around again, my mouth fell open.

I could now see why something looked so different about her tits.

Kennedi hadn’t been wearing a bra. And right now, she’d pulled the thin material of her outfit down, exposing those perfect tits that I couldn’t get enough of.

“Wow,” I muttered to myself as Kennedi walked closer to me, strutting her stuff like a runway model until she closed the distance. She reached down to grab both of my hands, not stopping until she placed them on her tits.

“This is what you needed me to reach?” I asked jokingly.

Kennedi purred as I pinched her nipple gently. “Any problems with that?”

“Oh, fuck no.”

“I didn’t think so.”

I just had to marvel at how fantastic her gravity-defying tits were. I could have done this all day, and I would have if we had all the time in the world. How could one woman be so damn sexy?

“What do we have here?” whispered Kennedi, reaching down to rub my cock. “Did I make you hard, baby?”

She didn’t wait for my answer. Kennedi hit her knees in front of me, pulling down my shorts in one swift motion until my cock bobbed free.

“So fucking *thick*,” she said as her hands wrapped around my shaft. “I can still feel how you fucked me last night. I’ve never been sore after sex before, but I’m definitely sore after a night with this monster.”

I sucked in air. “Sorry about that.”

She shook her head. “Trust me, that’s nothing to apologize for. Just promise me you’ll do it again and again and again?”

My cock lurched as she started to jerk me. “That’s a definite yes,” I replied.

“Mmm, perfect.”

Kennedi wasn’t content to just stroke my cock that morning. She had another idea in mind, especially when she opened her mouth and licked the tip of my shaft.

I groaned as I felt her lips wrap around the head. She started to suck almost immediately, creating a tight suction on me that felt simply incredible. I didn’t know a blow job could feel this good, but it was like Kennedi knew exactly what I wanted.

It also helped that she maintained eye contact the entire time, something that took the experience to the next level.

I wasn’t going to last long, especially when she started deepthroating me. She moved at a fast pace, sliding her lips along the entire length of my shaft as her hand fondled my balls. I was barely recharged from last night, but that didn’t stop me from delivering a fresh load of cum inside her mouth a few minutes later.

Just like before, Kennedi didn’t waste a drop. She swallowed it all before tucking me back into my shorts and jumping up to her feet.

“I’m definitely ready to start the day now,” she said, grinning back at me.

“After that? That’s all it took?”

Kennedi shrugged. “Some people need coffee to start their morning. All I need is a dose of your cum and I’m ready to go.”

I swallowed heavily. “I really like that answer.”

“I thought you might.”

She kissed my cheek before stuffing her tits back into her dress. I was disappointed to see her go find a bra to put on, but she had one more surprise for me before she left.

That surprise came as she grabbed my hand and pulled it between her legs. I felt the sheer heat from her pussy right away, but what was most noticeable was how I could feel her dampness directly against my fingers.

I bit my lip. “No panties today?”

Kennedi grinned. “Just wanted to give you something to think about while I’m cleaning the penthouses of old, rich fairy women.”

“You might end up giving them quite a tease if they see it.”

“Luckily for me, they don’t look at the help too much. So if it gives my boyfriend something pleasant to think about all day, I consider that a win-win.”

I chuckled. “You’re amazing.”

“I am pretty amazing, aren’t I?”

We laughed together and then we rejoined Sadie and Paulina. Kennedi waved bye to both of them as she left for her shift. Meanwhile, I pulled a chair up behind the other two goblin girls so I could listen in on the website talk.

“So how soon do you think you can have this going?” asked Paulina, who was making her way down a checklist of questions. “Are we talking days or weeks? Dare I ask, months?”

“No way, definitely not months,” replied Sadie, shaking her head. “Not even weeks. Actually, I think I might be able to get y'all a basic website up today.”

“Today?” asked Paulina. “Really?”

Sadie nodded. “Granted, it won’t have all the bells and whistles, but it will be a basic foundation that I can keep building around. And it will look ten times more professional than what you have now.”

“That sounds fantastic!” exclaimed Paulina. “That’s so much quicker than I thought it would be.”

“It’s not that bad when you know what you’re doing,” said Sadie. “But I need to know what you’ll eventually want to have on there? I’m assuming some kind of mission statement, contact information, and some details about the business since those are bare minimum. What else would you like to have?”

“We talked about shooting a video,” said Paulina. “Right, Kevin?”

“Yeah, kind of like a video infomercial,” I said. “Something that’s not too long but that introduces the business and the people in a way that’s more interactive than just reading an online application. Something that gives a personal touch right from the start.”

“I love it,” said Sadie. “That can be one of the first things people see when they log on your site. Have the video front and center, something that details exactly who you are.”

“We also talked about a list of reviews and testimonials,” added Paulina. “Maybe a separate section for those? I was able to compile a list of our most recent jobs, and all these people agreed to be references should we need them.”

Paulina produced a list and handed it over to me. The list was easily ten names/businesses long, and it included the duration of the job, the main contact name, and their contact information.

“Paulina, this is perfect,” I said, beaming with a smile. “And it definitely makes us look more legit.”

Paulina turned a deeper shade of green. “I’m glad you like it. I also took the liberty of updating our page on the Fairy Fixer Friends forum. Here, let me show you.”

She brought up the page, and I could tell she’d filled out more details about the business, including putting up a signature page that led directly to our newly-created page or references.

“That’s terrific,” I said. “I know it might not seem like much, but all these little changes are really going to help. Every piece makes it better.”

Sadie, who'd been writing down the different pages of the website she was going to create, looked up next. "So the only thing that's not ready for me now is the video, right? How soon will it take you to create that?"

"Well, I was thinking that Kevin and I could do it this afternoon," said Paulina. "I only have two penthouses I need to clean today, so my shift will be very light. I should be back right after lunch. Maybe we could shoot the video footage then?"

"That sounds perfect," I replied. "Editing the video might be challenging though. I'm not sure how we'll do that."

"Oh, that's easier than you'd think," said Sadie, waving her hand. "There's lots of video editing software out there. I can make that work too if you just feed me the raw footage and tell me what you want."

Paulina looked almost too excited. "Really? Sadie, that would be so amazing! Would I owe you extra for it though?"

"Nah, that's on the house," she replied. "Don't worry about it."

"It doesn't have to be," I said, frowning. "We can pay you for it. I don't want to take advantage of you, Sadie."

She shook her head. "You're not, I promise. Don't worry, we'll talk about it later, okay?"

I was a little confused about what she meant but I didn't push the issue. Sadie didn't see it as a problem, and it was one less expense that we needed to put out there. I just filed it away for another time.

Chapter Thirteen

Now that we had all the components, Sadie sketched out a basic layout of the website with our feedback. Once we had a plan, all that needed to happen was to do the work itself.

“Okay, I think I’ve got everything,” said Sadie finally. “I’m ready to start working now!”

Paulina was so happy that she hugged Sadie out of the blue, making the redheaded goblin girl laugh as she hugged her back.

“You should at least wait until you see the website first!” joked Sadie. “Don’t hug me yet. What if you hate it?”

“I really doubt that,” replied Paulina. “I’m just so happy to see things coming together.”

Sadie grinned and elbowed me. “Just be happy that Kevin came waltzing into my store yesterday.”

“Oh, believe me,” said Paulina. “I’m very grateful that he’s come into my life. *Very* grateful.”

There was a lot of fire in Paulina’s eyes at that moment, reminding me of the kiss we shared earlier that morning. I couldn’t help but think that another part of her defenses had come crashing down.

With Sadie starting her work, Paulina took the time to get dressed, and before I knew it, she was out the door to start her job for the day.

I had some plans of my own that morning. More than anything, I needed to get some clothes. I was tired of wearing the hand-me-downs from Kennedi’s brother, and I found a place that sold human clothing a short distance away. Paulina had given me some extra money to buy some clothes, and more than anything I wanted to make that money stretch since we were working with a limited budget.

Sadie was cool with working at the house while I was gone. In fact, I think she might have preferred the solitude as she worked, so I left the house in an effort to find clothing.

I found the place after about twenty minutes, not realizing that I'd walked by it once already. It was in the downtown section of Dragonmont City, and it occupied the basement floor of an otherwise crowded block full of other businesses. The first thing I noticed was how dark it was in the basement. There was very little in the way of natural light, and the lights that were lit were only a reminder of just how dark down there it actually was.

It wasn't that full for the time of day, and I could see one of the clerks behind the register as soon as I entered. That's when I finally understood why it was so dark.

The clerk was a vampire if I had to take a guess. She was deathly pale by the looks of her skin, but any similarities to Dracula ended there. Her hair wasn't neatly done but wild under her backwards ball cap. She was wearing a blood-red blouse with a bunch of necklaces hanging from around her neck. The shirt was paired with dark black shorts that ended right above her knees.

It was a strange style for anyone, let alone a vampire. She looked like someone who was changing from her working clothing to go to the beach and got caught right in the middle. I wasn't sure if I was willing to take fashion advice from her, but it was too late.

She already saw me.

"Wassup, man!" she said, jumping over the register and giving me a high five. "You here to buy some clothes n' shit?"

I couldn't help but chuckle. Her accent was definitely not what I expected.

"Mostly clothes but definitely no shit," I replied. "Can you help me with that?"

"My dude, I can make you the flyest-looking human in all Dragonmont City," she said. "What are you looking for? Or are we startin' from scratch? You've got the look of a rebornie."

"Definitely a rebornie," I confirmed. "Just got spit out two days ago."

"I had a feeling," she said. "You can call me Ms. Fly. Most people do, seeing as that's my job. By the time you walk out of here, you'll be getting

all the girls in Dragonmont City, my man. No questions asked!”

“I think I’m already doing okay in that department,” I replied, not wanting to give her the wrong idea. “I mean, I have my eyes set on a couple girls already.”

“That’s what I’m talking about!” said Ms. Fly. “Well then, let me help make you look like the handsomest G to them, okay?”

I chuckled. “Sounds good.”

I still had my doubts about how handsome of a G I would look like with her help, but as I followed Ms. Fly around the store, she started grabbing a bunch of different shirts, pants, and shorts. Right away, I could tell there was going to be a problem.

“Erm, I don’t have much of a budget,” I told her “Because I was just reborn. I’m not going to be able to pay for much.”

“I got you, don’t worry about a thing, chicken wing,” she said, still pulling clothes off without missing a beat. “We specialize here in helping rebornies. You won’t find the prices too out of the ballpark.”

I was inclined to trust her, mostly seeing as the choices she was making for me weren’t as outlandish as the clothes she was wearing. I let Ms. Fly do her thing for another five minutes or so before she had a small stack of clothing in her hands.

“That should do it for now!” she said as she grabbed my arm and tugged me closer to the dressing rooms. “I have a few outfits paired together. Just go inside and change, and then come out when you’re done.”

She pressed the clothes into my hand and gestured for me to go inside. The changing room was tiny, but there was a bench to sit on, a mirror, and a rack to put all the clothes on.

The first outfit she had me in was something a little more nice than casual. It consisted of a royal-blue button-down shirt and a nice pair of black slacks to go with it. After I put it on, I thought it would work well with the girls, maybe for a date in the city. Once the last button was done, I stepped out to get Ms. Fly’s appraisal.

“Oh my,” she said, fanning herself while her necklaces jiggled. “You look slicker than a pickle in a jar of honey!”

I couldn’t tell if that was a good or a bad thing at first. “What does that even mean?”

“It just means you look great! Really sharp, and I knew that blue color would look great on you. Yes, yes, that one’s a definite buy.”

I had to agree with her. Plus I figured it could help to have one outfit that was more dressed up than the others.

I returned to the changing room and looked at the second set of clothing.

This one was more my style. A simple pair of jeans and a silver shirt with some kind of logo that took up most of the front. It was definitely well-fitting and comfortable, and the clerk certainly approved when I stepped back outside.

“Now you’re the flyest-looking man in the city!” she said before hovering around me. “And those jeans make your ass pop like wow!”

She was right about that. My ass looked really good in those jeans. Not quite as good as the way Kennedi’s looked while being split by a thong, but enough that I thought the girls would like it.

“Okay, two for two so far,” I said. “Let me try on the last one.”

The last outfit was even simpler than the second. This one consisted of a pair of black-and-blue board shorts and an easy summer tank. Ms. Fly even put a pair of dark sunglasses with the outfit, and they were a nice addition.

“Now you look like you’re ready to slay some honeys at the beach,” said Ms. Fly. “Sweet Neptune, am I good at my job or what?”

“I’m very happy with all three of them,” I said, pulling my shades down over my nose. “I’m almost afraid to see the price tag on them, but I think you picked me some great clothes.”

I changed back into my original clothes and brought the pile over to the register, where Ms. Fly had run everything up. “Looks like it’s going to be twenty bronze opals. Most of this stuff was on sale so you’re getting an incredible deal!”

My mouth almost hit the floor. I was not expecting it to be that cheap, and I even had some bronze opals leftover once it was done. I waved goodbye to Ms. Fly, thanking her for her help as I walked toward the door.

“Don’t even sweat it!” she called. “And if you have any friends, tell them to pay your old friend Ms. Fly a visit. I’ll make them look almost as good as you!”

I hit the street with a serious bounce in my step. I grabbed a fresh apple from one of the trees downtown, enjoying it as I walked back to the duplex. I hadn’t been out long, but I wondered how much progress Sadie had made with the website.

When I got back, I found Sadie in deep concentration as she worked on it, and I felt bad about disturbing her. Instead, I gave her a wave and headed for my room, unloading my new clothes. I put them through the laundry once, which was wrapped up right around lunch time.

Just for fun, I put on the board shorts and tank top, liking the way the outfit felt on me.

By the time I was dressed, Sadie was ready for me.

“You’ve got to see this!” she said, looking both excited and nervous at the same time. That was when she checked out my new digs for the first time. “Wow, you’re looking great.”

“You really like them?” I asked. “You’re not just saying that to protect my feelings, are you?”

Sadie blew a raspberry. “No way, you look hot. I like it. I like it a lot!”

I shrugged. “Now I feel like I can stand next to you and not look like a scrub.”

Sadie grinned. “Is that just your way of saying you think I’m pretty?”

“Yeah, kinda. Did it work?”

She kissed my cheek. “Totally. Now, come on!”

She led me back to Paulina’s room and gestured for me to sit down next to the desk. As soon as I did, she brought up the new website.

“Don’t be too hard on me,” she said cautiously. “There’s still a lot I need to do, but it’s a basic template that is going to allow us to add things continuously.”

I don’t know how she thought I could possibly be mad at her. The website looked incredible. It was simple yet elegant, having a modern design that looked like it was created this year and not before Windows 98 came out.

“You did all of this today?” I asked in amazement before turning to her. “What are you, part android or something?”

Sadie giggled. “I’m just good with computer science, remember? I’ve been studying it long enough.”

“But you sold yourself so short when we first talked about it,” I said. “I almost wasn’t expecting this level of awesomeness.”

“What can I say? I under-promise and over-deliver.”

“I’ll say,” I muttered. “This is so cool. Paulina is going to be thrilled with this!”

“I really hope so,” said Sadie. “And look right here. I left this spot blank so we can put your video there once it’s ready. For now, I’m just going to put your new logo there, so it doesn’t look empty to customers, but once the video is ready, it’ll go front and center.”

I even loved the logo. It was just a simple one, showing a goblin girl’s head wearing her maid bonnet, but it conveyed a very friendly image while telling everyone just what we were all about.

“I’m seriously impressed,” I said. “I had no idea it was going to be this easy.”

Sadie gave me a long look. “Some things are very easy when you have the right person.”

Her simple statement spoke volumes. When I glanced at Sadie next, I saw a look that I’d previously only seen on Paulina’s or Kennedi’s face.

It was a look of desire, or a look of wanting.

And I had to admit—I loved the way it felt.

“I think so too,” I said.

Sadie blushed, taking a lock of her red hair and tucking it behind her ear. I loved the way it looked on her—sexy and demure at the same time.

I could have stayed with her there that entire afternoon, but Sadie pointed out the time a moment later.

“Crap, I need to run,” she said. “I got a call about a job interview this morning, and they want me to come in this afternoon.”

“Jeez, you took your time trying to find a new job,” I teased.

“No rest for me,” she said, giggling. “But let me know about the video tonight, okay? Just send me the raw components and I’ll put it together for you.”

“Sounds like a great plan,” I said.

Sadie stood up from her chair quickly as I did the same. For that moment, we were in each other’s personal space, close enough that I got a whiff of her sweet scent. It was as intoxicating as she was, and I added it to the long list of things that captivated me about her.

I thought to step out of the way until Sadie grabbed me by the arm. I froze, not knowing what to expect until she put her arms around my shoulders. For several tense moments we stared into each other’s eyes until I lowered my mouth to hers.

We kissed for several minutes, exploring each other while my hands wrapped around her lower back.

“I’ve been wanting to do that all morning,” said Sadie, showing me that infectious grin. “Hope you don’t mind.”

“We could do it again some more if you like? Like a lot more?”

Sadie giggled. “It’s so tempting, you don’t even know. But I do have to run. How about I collect the next time we see each other?”

“I’d really like that.”

“Me too.”

Sadie smiled as she slipped out from behind the desk. I followed her to the door, watching her lovely ass sashay down the hallway. She turned to wave

at me as she exited the duplex, and I already found myself anxious for the next time I would see her.

Chapter Fourteen

For the rest of the morning, I laid low. I ate lunch around noon, and after that was over, I watched some television show I found after surfing the channels. It wasn't from Earth thankfully, but it was a pretty entertaining show about a goblin mafia, which I liked a whole lot more than I was willing to admit.

"Come on, Rufus, you're breakin' my balls here," said a goblin wearing a green fedora and pinstripe suit. I was still laughing at the scene when I heard the front door open.

"Looks like someone is enjoying some wholesome goblin entertainment," said Paulina as she made her way into the living room, still wearing her maid outfit.

"It was either this or *Happy Days*," I joked. "And this is actually pretty entertaining."

"I like that show too," she admitted.

"How was work?" I asked. "No Mrs. Pennington's today?"

"Thankfully, no, it was pretty quiet. Though I could definitely use a shower before I relax."

I grinned at her. "Want company?"

Paulina planted her hands on her hips. "You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

I nodded my head rapidly.

She started to laugh. "You just wait here, lover boy. But don't think I forgot that we have a video to shoot this afternoon!"

I was looking forward to that. Not just because the video would rightfully have Paulina front and center, but because I was eager to see what the finished product would look like.

Okay, but mostly because it was Paulina. That woman could arouse the dead with her smile.

I waited while Paulina took a shower, got some lunch, and then reappeared about forty-five minutes later, wearing a fresh maid outfit and holding an old video camera.

“So how should we do this?” she asked, sitting down beside me on the couch and putting one smooth, green leg on my lap. “I’ve never shot or starred in a video before, so I’m hoping you have some good ideas about what to do.”

“I was thinking we don’t have to get too crazy,” I said. “It’s just a video commercial, and that can take many forms. More than anything, I want it to have a personal touch, so that any potential customers understand that Goblin Girl Maid Service isn’t just a business. It’s someone they know, someone they’ve seen already. You’re not just another faceless entity on the forums.”

“But we also don’t want it to be too long,” she said. “Or we risk losing their interest, right?”

“Totally, I’d say between thirty to sixty seconds would be the sweet spot. Just enough to tell them who we are before they click away.”

“It sounds like we need a script then,” said Paulina. “Here let's brainstorm some ideas.”

It took us about twenty minutes to write out a script that would work for the commercial. Nothing about it was too fancy. More than anything, it was just about Paulina talking about the business, and I figured we could start with her and then lead into a few before-and-after shots of what clients could expect with GGMS while her voice was heard in the background.

Now that our script was ready, it was time to shoot. I could tell Paulina was nervous once I focused the camera on her, and she started wringing her hands out of anxiety.

“Everything will be just fine,” I said, trying to soothe her. “Just remember your lines and if you mess up, we’ll shoot it again.”

“But what if I forget my lines?” she asked nervously.

“You’ll be fine, I promise.”

She still looked anxious when we started to shoot. We got through the first couple takes, but there were none that we could use, mostly because of a couple of word stumbles. Paulina found her groove by the third take, but she wasn't happy with the finished process when I played it back for her.

"I sound so . . . stiff," she said. "Like a robot reading from a prompter. I don't like it."

"You have to relax a little," I advised. "Let go of your tension."

"But so many people are going to see this!"

"True, but right now it's just me and you. And you have nothing to be embarrassed about when it comes to me."

That seemed to help her a little, and the next two takes showed considerable improvement. She still wasn't a fan of the finished product, mostly because on the last one she stumbled on a sentence right in the middle.

"I keep messing up my lines," she said with some frustration. "Why do I keep messing up?"

"You're still a little nervous, but it's okay. Try improvising?"

"What do you mean?"

I set the camera down. "It's your business after all. No one knows it better than you. Who cares if you forget the exact phrasing of the line? Just talk from the heart. Talk passionately about your business. I have a feeling that anything you say will still come out great because this business is your baby. You're the best advocate for it anywhere."

Paulina seemed to take that to heart, and she took a couple of deep breaths before we started again. This time, she remembered the majority of her lines. When she came to one line that she'd stumbled on before, she quickly pivoted and delivered an improvised line that still got the same message across but used different words.

I knew we had a winner when I hit the stop button. "Come over here and watch this!"

Paulina came closer and I put my hand against her hip before pushing play. We watched the forty-second long sound bite of Paulina in her outfit,

holding a duster as she introduced herself and what the business could do for their clients.

“Wow, that actually looks pretty good,” whispered Paulina once we got to the end.

“That’s because it *is* really good,” I replied. “That was fantastic!”

“I improvised that one line though. You sure it doesn’t sound too janky? Should we shoot it again?”

I laughed and kissed her, being surprised when she returned it willingly. “No, it’s perfect. We should probably get a few before-and-after shots to submit to Sadie. After that, we can let her work her magic.”

Paulina pulled out her phone and opened the picture gallery. “Do you think these will do?”

I flipped through them, realizing she had several of them already, and most of them looked like they were from this morning.

“Paulina, that’s amazing. How did you get these so soon?”

She shrugged and smiled. “I was thinking about doing this before you even said anything.”

“They do say great minds think alike.”

She leaned up to kiss me. “I was thinking the same.”

We took the pictures and the video to her computer, where we uploaded it into one folder and prepared to send it to Sadie. I was eager to see what our IT whiz would do with it, but for now all we could do was wait.

Or so I thought.

Not long after I hit send, I felt something feathery brush against the side of my head. I turned to see Paulina grinning widely as she used her duster to get my attention.

“*So* sorry,” she said jokingly. “I just saw a speck of dirt there that I had to get.”

“Oh, yeah? Is it gone now?”

“Not yet.”

She used her duster against my nose that time, making me laugh because it tickled.

“Oh, shucks, it moved again,” said Paulina, this time brushing it against my neck. “You know I’ve heard before that dust bunnies like to migrate a lot. This must be what we’re dealing with here.”

“Is that right? Because it looks like it’s migrating to you now!”

I snatched her duster out of her hand and turned it loose, brushing the light fabric against her upper chest while Paulina giggled and tried to get away. She ran over to her bed and put her hands up like she was going to playfully fight me.

“You’re not getting away that easily!” I said, charging with her duster.

Paulina shrieked and tried to get away, but I wrapped my arms around her and pushed her down on her bed. Her dark hair fell against her face and her outfit rode up her leg, giving me a view that led almost to her ass.

I paused for a moment, mostly because I was enjoying the sight a little too much. Paulina noticed and gave me a questioning look.

“What is it?”

I shook my head. “Nothing, just that this would make a tempting video too. I’d be your client for the rest of my life if I saw a video of you like this on a bed.”

Paulina wiggled her eyebrows and gestured toward the video camera. “And how would a video like that go exactly?”

“However we wanted it to go,” I replied. “Anything you do would be watchable to me. You could sit there and file your nails and I’d still watch.”

She gave me a smile that wasn’t as playful as the one before it. Instead, this one was heated. Her voice was a little deeper when she spoke next. “Go grab the video camera.”

I felt the tension in the room shifting. As soon as she said the words, I felt my cock lurch inside my shorts. I grabbed the video camera off the desk and approached the bed again, finding that she’d shifted lower still.

As an added bonus, her maid skirt had now gone up even further, revealing part of her ass.

“How do I look?” asked Paulina breathlessly as she gave me a smoldering-hot look.

“Gorgeous. I can’t take my eyes off of you.”

I watched as her chest rose and fell. Her lips pursed together and she shifted her arm, resting it over her head. I hit record on the video camera.

As soon as I did, Paulina’s hands went down to her outfit. She pulled the top of it down slightly, which revealed more of her cleavage. I could have gotten lost in that green valley, and I had a hard time not focusing solely on that.

Except when I looked at her legs. They seemed to span for miles—every curve was a place that I wanted to explore.

“I really like how this feels,” said Paulina a moment later, shifting to give me another view.

“How what feels?”

“That you’re recording me,” she said breathlessly. “I’ve never done anything like this before.”

Paulina moved into a kneeling position, using her elbows to push her breasts together. The top of her outfit shifted lower still, almost to the point where I felt like her nipple would soon be visible.

“The camera certainly loves you,” I said. “And it’s not hard to see why.”

“I think it’s just because it’s in your experienced hands,” she teased.

I chuckled. “I’m glad you think so.”

Paulina leaned back over the bed, laying down and resting her neck right on the edge, so that she was looking at me upside down. Not only was she still gorgeous from this awkward angle, but now her tits looked fucking incredible.

My mouth was watering and my cock was harder than steel, something she must have noticed.

“I think you like this position better than the others,” she said, using her finger to drag along her exposed cleavage.

“Fuck me, Paulina,” I stammered. “Why do you have to be so hot?”

“I love that you think so,” she said. “Nobody else has ever looked at me like you do.”

“Everyone else is fucking crazy as far as I’m concerned. Fit for the loony bin.”

She giggled, which made her cleavage ripple. I bit my lip in agony and frustration, wanting nothing more than to free them.

Suddenly, Paulina sat up from the bed and pushed off, using her finger to gesture for me to follow. I moved behind her as she walked backward, giving the camera several sultry looks as she made her way to the kitchen.

She turned around when she reached the kitchen table, and much to my enjoyment, she bent over it while keeping her legs ramrod straight.

I was in serious lust seeing those legs and half of her exposed ass. Paulina looked back at me as I kept rolling, her fingers inching her skirt ever higher.

“You have no idea what you’re doing to me,” I said, resisting the urge to grab my cock.

“Maybe that’s what I wanted all along? To drive you crazy?”

“You’re definitely succeeding beyond your wildest dreams.”

“Good. I like to win.”

Paulina turned around and sat on the table, spreading her legs wide. The length of the skirt prevented me from having a perfect shot between her legs, not that she didn’t do that purposefully.

“Put the camera down,” she whispered. “Come here.”

I couldn’t drop that camera fast enough. I set it on the table beside me and walked toward her. Paulina’s arms were out, and I slipped between her legs as we started to kiss passionately.

It was like an explosion went off. All the tension between us ignited the second we were able to physically connect. I enjoyed the wonderful taste of her lips as our bodies pressed together.

To make it even better, I could feel my cock pressing against her mound. I desperately wanted to rip off the rest of our clothing and complete the motion.

Paulina giggled and slipped out of my embrace, hopping off the table. “Can I tell you something that might frighten you?”

“I don’t think there’s anything you could say that would frighten me right now,” I said jokingly.

“I like you a lot,” she said, resting her arms against my shoulders. “And it surprises me how fast it’s moving. I just met you, but I really like you.”

“I like you too, Paulina,” I said, kissing her gently. “We’re not moving too fast for you, are we?”

“Honestly, yes,” she said, laughing. “But I don’t want to slow down. I’m nervous about it, but I like it too much to stop.”

“Good, because I don’t want to slow down either.”

Paulina put her hand against my chest. “I was thinking. The tub is ready for us to go in tonight, right?”

“It’s ready to go in right now if you want to . . .”

“Well, I think tonight would be really fun,” she said, her eyes twinkling with mischief. “If you know what I mean?”

“Someone wants to get busy in the hot tub, eh?”

She laughed. “Maybe a little. Is that okay with you?”

“As long as Kennedi doesn’t mind. Though I suspect Kennedi would be the first to sign up to watch that.”

“You’re not wrong,” she said, laughing so hard she snorted. “So it’s a date then?”

“Count on it. I can’t wait.”

“Me too,” she said, kissing me sweetly before her hand dipped down to rest on my cock. “Save this for me until tonight? I’m going to take care of him.”

I looked at the clock in the kitchen. Waiting until tonight was going to be sheer agony. But seeing the look in Paulina’s eyes would make the wait entirely worth it.

I just needed to find a way to speed up time.

Chapter Fifteen

WAITING until nighttime was every bit the total frustration that I thought it would be.

Mostly because I swore Paulina was trying to tease me. I didn't think it was my imagination just going wild, especially when she kept finding reasons to bend over in front of me, or to press her body against me while she was cooking dinner.

Even Kennedi seemed to notice.

"You're very touchy-feely tonight, Polly," said Kennedi as she raised a knowing eyebrow. "Did something interesting happen today while I was gone?"

"Wouldn't you like to know?" shot Paulina, humming to herself as she set the table.

Kennedi gave me a questioning look. I just held up my hands. "A gentleman never tells."

"Oh, I don't know," teased Kennedi. "You weren't that gentle with me, you know."

"Well, you preferred it that way."

Kennedi nodded. "This is true."

"Nothing happened, nosy," admonished Paulina. "Kevin and I are just getting to know each other."

"That's what I call what we did last night," said Kennedi with a lewd grin. "Just getting to know each other."

She made a silly gesture involving her hands, which made me start to laugh. Paulina poked her in response.

"Ow, my ribs," groaned Kennedi. "I wanted to be poked but not like that!"

"So are we all in agreement?" asked Paulina. "We are going to try out the hot tub tonight?"

“I don’t think you could keep me from it if you tried,” replied Kennedi. “I’m so in. I have such a sexy suit I want to wear in there too. Kevin’s going to love it.”

This was getting better by the second. The more they talked, the more I found myself shoveling food into my mouth so dinner could be over.

I wasn’t the only one though. Paulina was clearly eating quickly too. We finished our dinner at a record pace, and then we all retreated to our room to put on some swimwear.

Once I had on a pair of trunks, I moved toward the rooftop terrace. It was already pretty dark up there, so I turned on one of the outdoor lamps to give off just the right amount of light to set the mood that I wanted. Then I took off the cover and dipped my hand in the water.

It was perfect.

I climbed over the side and took my first step into the full tub, feeling water go up to my stomach. It was a heavenly feeling, and I couldn’t wait to be completely submerged.

I hadn’t been in a hot tub in nearly two years, which was ironic because I took care of them more than I got to actually enjoy them.

But now? Feeling those jets against my lower back was pure bliss. The only way this could get better was with some incredibly beautiful ladies.

I got my wish moments later when Kennedi arrived. My eyes bulged as I saw that skimpy purple bikini that was a complete match for her hair color. The entire thing looked like it was made of just a few strips of fabric kept together with tight strings.

I watched as her hips swayed while she walked, keeping that sultry smile on her lips until she reached the hot tub.

“Suits are optional inside the tub, right?” she asked, making me stammer.

“I could definitely get down with that rule.”

She grinned and splashed some water in my direction. “Just kidding. By the way, do you like my bikini?”

I nodded very quickly. “So you picked this one over the leopard print?”

“I like this one better,” she said, grinning. “But I promise you can take the leopard print one off me the next time, okay?”

Kennedi lifted her leg to get inside, sitting on the other side of me. She let out a low groan of approval as she rested her head against the rest. “Yes, yes, yes, that hits the right spot.”

I hadn’t heard sounds like that since last night. Frankly, it was turning me on to listen to her moans of approval.

To make things even better, Paulina showed up next, and my eyes locked on her as she made her way to the tub. I was in awe of her beauty. Paulina’s suit wasn’t nearly as revealing as Kennedi’s, but damn, did she kill it. It was a two-piece suit that was entirely white, making the goblin girl look very innocent by comparison.

And yet, one look into Paulina’s eyes showed none of that innocence. Instead I saw a lingering heat that made my cock hard in a matter of seconds.

I was practically tongue-tied as Paulina entered the tub. My mind was definitely elsewhere, so I mostly listened in while the girls talked to each other at first.

“I can’t wait to see this new video, Polly,” said Kennedi. “You said it’s being made right now?”

“Oh yeah, Sadie said she’d work on it tonight for us,” confirmed Paulina. “Not sure how soon it will be ready, but I didn’t get the impression it would take too long.”

“We’re so lucky we ran into her like we did. I haven’t seen her in so long, but she’s like the perfect person that can help us.”

Paulina glanced at me. “Well, we have another perfect person right here who can help us.”

“I was just in the right place at the right time,” I said, making the girls laugh.

“Or the wrong place at the wrong time,” joked Kennedi. “Though I will say I don’t miss cleaning Mrs. Pennington’s penthouse.”

“Mrs. Pennington’s penthouse, say that five times fast,” said Paulina.

“I said that exact same joke to the front desk guy at her penthouse,” I said, turning toward Paulina.

“The crusty, humorless one?” she asked. “Yeah, he didn’t play along, did he?”

“Nah, not even close.”

“What a party pooper.”

The girls started idly chatting again when I noticed a “disturbance” under the water. And it came from two directions at the same time.

To my left, in the direction of Paulina, I felt someone’s leg slide right under mine. She ran her toe all the way from my ankle up to my calf and back down several times—a soft, lingering tease that I greatly enjoyed.

On my right though, in Kennedi’s direction, I felt someone with much less restraint trail her hand up my other knee, moving over the fabric of my trunks until she reached my cock, giving it a hard squeeze.

Above the water, it would have been impossible to tell that anything was amiss. The two goblin girls were still chatting, but below the water, I could feel Paulina’s leg trailing higher while Kennedi pulled my trunks down, putting her hands on my bare cock.

I didn’t know if this was planned out or just happening naturally, but either way I didn’t care. I was along for the ride and that was good enough for me. Especially when Kennedi started to jerk me off earnestly while she talked about getting new clients.

“We could always make a bid for the Vaughn Event Center?” she said casually as she worked her hand up and down my shaft. “There are a lot of back-end offices there that will need to be cleaned on a regular basis.”

“I thought about that already,” said Paulina, whose foot was now inching up my thigh. “But we would need a bigger staff to get it. They require a company with at least ten workers.”

“Ah, the first time I’ll ever complain that a big ‘staff’ fucked me,” said Kennedi with an adorable sigh. She squeezed my cock the moment she said staff.

Paulina laughed. “Kennedi, you’re so blunt.”

The purple-haired goblin shrugged. “I find that things go a lot easier when you just say what you want. How do you feel about that, Kevin?”

My eyes closed as she picked up the pace. “Yeah, definitely,” I said, enjoying my impromptu hand job.

I was wondering what was going to happen when Paulina’s leg met Kennedi’s hand, but the transition was smoother than I anticipated.

It was like the girls simply switched roles. Suddenly, I felt Kennedi’s leg teasing my right calf muscle while Paulina’s hand started to stroke my cock.

Each woman wore a little smile as they switched roles, no doubt having planned this before they even got into the tub. I let out a groan as I felt Paulina start to stroke me—which was the furthest that we’d gone sexually.

“Are you okay, Kevin?” asked Kennedi, her eyes dancing with mischief. “You look a little flustered. Is the tub too hot for you?”

Paulina squeezed my shaft before I could answer. “No, that can’t be it. The water is just perfect. I love it in here, don’t you, Kevin?”

I nodded, not trusting myself to form words.

Paulina smiled lasciviously. “It feels like it’s getting hotter though, doesn’t it? Like it’s heating up in here?”

Kennedi turned around to look at the control panel. “Nope, the temperature is still at 103 degrees.”

“Hmm, I wonder what else is causing it then,” said Paulina, stroking me harder.

Another groan escaped my lips. I was absolutely loving this. I could tell the difference between Paulina’s hand and Kennedi’s, and I loved to feel the difference between the two women.

Kennedi stroked me like she’d done it many times before. It was brazen, bold, and forceful—jerking me with purpose like she couldn’t wait for the result.

Paulina was much more tepid than that though. She was more exploratory than Kennedi, taking time to stroke lovingly in a way that built up tension.

To make matters even better, they kept switching off. For the next thirty minutes, the girls kept me on edge, switching control every five minutes or so until I felt like I was ready to burst.

By this point, all pretense of what was going on underwater had ended. The girls were giggling to themselves as they switched off, especially once they saw the look on my face.

I needed to cum, and I needed to do it soon.

I remembered what Paulina had promised me earlier, and that's why I wasn't surprised when Kennedi announced she was getting out of the tub.

She gave my cock one last squeeze as she floated closer to me, kissing me passionately before slipping out of the tub.

"I don't want to get pruny," she said, holding up her wrinkled hand. "You two have fun, okay? And Paulina, I want to hear all about it later."

Paulina smiled nervously as Kennedi waved her goodbye, disappearing back into the house.

As soon as we were alone, Paulina resumed stroking me underwater. She moved closer until our legs were touching.

"I think you two planned this," I said, panting as I tried to catch my breath.

"Whatever are you talking about?" she asked, fluttering her eyelashes at me.

I grabbed her hand in mid-jerk. "This!"

"Oh, *that*! That just happened spontaneously."

"Yeah, I'm sure," I said, chuckling. I took a moment to stare into her eyes. "You've come a long way since we met."

Paulina stopped stroking temporarily. "What do you mean?"

"I mean when we met you were so guarded with me. I knew I liked you right from the start, but I felt like I had to work for it with you. Bring your walls down, you know?"

“I’ve always been like that,” she admitted. “Kennedi has always been more open than me. More fun, less serious. More sexual. For me it just takes a little longer to let people in.”

“Why do you think that is?”

Paulina shrugged. “I don’t know. Maybe just the way I grew up? I didn’t have siblings, and my parents were always doing something else. I didn’t have many people to open up to. Until Kennedi came along. And now you.”

“I’m really glad you’re opening up to me,” I said. “I mean, hot tub hand jobs aside, I really enjoy spending time with you.”

She rewarded me with a beaming smile. “I can truly say the same thing. I didn’t know what to do about your guardianship at first. Part of me wanted to tell you to take a hike after what happened with Mrs. Pennington.”

“I wouldn’t have blamed you if you did.”

“But the other part of me saw how genuine you were,” she continued. “That you were just trying to do what was right. It was that part of me that won. And honestly, it’s that part of me that’s falling for you.”

I was surprised to hear her say that. We hadn’t even come close to broaching that topic yet, and I expected her to be as guarded with her feelings as she’d already been. But Paulina’s defenses had come crashing down already

The walls were gone. She was open, and she was trusting me with her heart.

“I think I’m falling for you too, Paulina.”

Before I’d even finished the words, we were kissing. Her body was pressed tight against mine, rocking the water with her rapid movements. My hands were all over her, grabbing her ass and shifting her so that she was sitting on my cock.

She was frantic as we kissed, not being able to get enough. I knew the feeling. There was nothing I wanted more than to make her mine.

Not just in words, but in deeds as well.

With the heat in her kiss and the way her body melted against me, I thought there was a serious chance it could happen.

When our lips separated, I started kissing every part of her I could reach. I started at her chin and worked my way up her jaw, not stopping until I reached her long, goblin ears before dipping back down and hitting her neck all the way to her chest. I could taste a faint hint of chlorine on her skin, but I didn't mind at all.

This was *my* Paulina, and she was giving herself to me now. I wasn't about to complain about such silly matters.

"Kiss me more," she begged, practically whimpering as her hips grinded against my cock. "Please? Don't ever stop kissing me."

I attacked her lips with renewed passion as I reached up with both hands, cupping her tits together. It didn't take much effort until I pulled down the top, exposing her breasts to me for the first time.

They were so perfect. Not enormous like Kennedi's, but they were still perfect nonetheless. I was most captivated by her nipples, those fleshy nubs standing out like thick erasers in their hardness. I leaned down, wrapping my lips around each of them in turn, which only made her moan louder.

"Bite them," she hissed. "Bite my nipples. Softly. Like that. Just like that. Oh fuck. Oh Kevin. Feels so good. Don't *stop*!"

I was enamored with her tits. I couldn't get enough of them. Every time I tried to break away to pay attention to another part of her body, I found myself coming back, not that she seemed to care one bit.

I was losing control—too consumed with the thought of being with this incredible woman sitting on my lap.

I didn't know how far Paulina wanted to go tonight. I didn't know if we would have sex or just tease each other, but I didn't want to ask, worried that it would ruin the mood. I knew Paulina would set the pace, but I was surprised when she raised up, stepping on the seat with one leg as she reached between us.

I didn’t know what she was doing, but when she sat down again, I could feel something was different. The tip of my cock was poking into something that didn’t feel like her bikini bottom, and one look in Paulina’s eyes told me all I needed to know.

We stared into each other’s eyes as I reached between us, grabbing my shaft and shifting it backward just a little to match up the angle. Paulina smiled right as she started to sit down, pushing my cock inside her pussy for the first time.

I watched the emotions on her face as I filled her. Her mouth dropped open and she started to pant at first, not used to my size. Then I saw her eyes roll upward with pleasure as I stretched her open.

Being inside Paulina was an amazing experience. Once more I was reminded of why this pairing was so natural. Her pussy felt like it was made for my cock, stretched tight around every ridge, squeezing the life out of me.

We kissed tenderly as we both got used to the feeling. It was affectionate, like we were celebrating the fact that we’d finally crossed the last barrier between us. Within seconds though, it turned utterly passionate as Paulina raised up and sank back down.

I scooted my butt toward the edge, using my hands to grab Paulina’s ass. That gave me great leverage inside the tub, and we were able to half-sit, half-float as we fucked, creating waves with each downward stroke that she made.

“Oh my gosh,” whimpered Paulina. “So good. So *fucking* good. I love your cock. Oh, Kevin. Oh, baby. Uh huh. Please fuck me. Fuck me so good.”

I was addicted to the sounds of her moans. Every little bit of sound that escaped her voice added fuel to my lust. I couldn’t possibly get enough. I could have listened to Paulina’s moans on repeat for the rest of my life and never been sated.

Especially knowing that I was the reason for them.

We were moving rapidly now. Water was spilling over the sides of the tub. We were probably visible to half the population of Dragonmont City, but I couldn’t have cared less. This was as close to heaven as I was going to get.

Especially once Paulina neared her first orgasm. I suspected something was coming because her words died down for a brief moment, replaced by moans that were getting increasingly louder. She was gripping my back as hard as she could, with her nails digging into my flesh. Her breath was jagged and hot against my neck, and I could feel her pussy squeezing my shaft every time she came down.

Finally, it happened. Paulina seized up, losing the ability to move temporarily. I grabbed onto her ass hard and pounded upward, hoping to make her ride right through her orgasm.

She shrieked when it was finally out. Her entire body shuddered as she tried to keep her composure. All the while, her pussy latched onto my shaft like it was never going to let it out of her body again.

When she finally came to, Paulina opened one weary eye and smiled at me. I was still throbbing inside her and ready to go for more.

“I’ve never felt like that before,” she admitted, blowing her hair out of her face. “What did you do to me?”

“I’m pretty sure you just had an orgasm,” I joked. “That felt good?”

“If that was an orgasm, then I’ve never had *that* before.”

I thought about what a crime that was—that a gorgeous woman like her should only have her first orgasm at the relatively old age of twenty-four. At that moment, I vowed to give her more than enough orgasms to make up for lost time.

Paulina looked down at the water. “We knocked so much water out!”

Sure enough, the waves we’d created had splashed plenty of it out.

“It’s okay, it’s just water,” I said. “I can put more in.”

Paulina kissed me. “Come on, I want to continue this somewhere else.”

She grabbed her top and pulled it back over her tits before stepping out of the tub. I had to do the same with my trunks as I followed her. We didn’t have much time to dry off, too engaged with kissing each other as we made our way downstairs to Paulina’s bedroom.

As soon as the door was shut, my wet trunks hit the floor right on top of my towel. Paulina pulled her wet hair to the side as she stripped for me, showing those perfect tits right before those white bottoms fell down her sensual green legs.

She grabbed my hands and led me to the bed. I hadn't cum yet, and I was still throbbing hard, so Paulina wrapped her lips around my shaft and started to suck me.

I groaned in approval, looking down at those pretty green eyes as she filled her mouth with my cock. I could tell she didn't have as much experience as Kennedi, but I still enjoyed every second of it. What made it incredible was that I could tell Paulina was only worried about my pleasure. She explored every inch of my shaft, varying her technique in order to find what I liked the most.

Once she found just the right amount of spit and pressure, she kept doing it, reading my body like it was an instruction manual.

Right before I was about to pop, she crawled back on top of me and reinserted me into her body. Paulina must have been aroused by sucking my cock because she came almost as soon as I was back inside, nearly collapsing against my chest.

I didn't give a moment to recover this time. I needed to cum badly, so I grabbed her hips and started thrusting with every ounce of power I had in my body. Paulina's moans were so loud that I felt like every neighbor on the street must have heard us.

That, or they could hear the way our hips slapped together every time our bodies met.

If anything, that made it even more fun. I wanted all of Dragonmont City to know that Paulina was mine, that I was going to claim her tonight.

More than anything, I wanted to cum. I wanted to cum so deeply in Paulina and leave no doubt that she belonged to me.

"More," urged Paulina. "More, give me more, please!"

When she came again, I felt like she was going to black out. Her pussy squeezed me so hard that the most intense feeling of pleasure ricocheted

down my shaft. I could feel it through my entire body, especially whenever my balls let go, sending a raging torrent of cum all the way up my shaft.

When I came, I buried myself in Paulina. I didn't want a single drop to escape her pussy. I kept her plugged while she kissed me over and over again.

"Fill me, fill me, fill me," she chanted. "Shoot it all in me!"

By the time we recovered, we'd soaked half the bed with the water left on our bodies from the hot tub, as well as a healthy amount of sweat. We probably looked pretty ragged, but we felt so very damn good.

I thought that Paulina might need some time to recover, but she surprised me when she rolled down onto the bed, bringing me with her. I was still hard, thanks to the magical aphrodisiac powers of goblin pussy, and she was still looking at me with lust in her eyes.

"Again," she urged. "And again. And again. And again? Pretty please?"

Who was I to turn her down?

Chapter Sixteen

The next morning I woke up to find Paulina snuggled against my chest, sleeping soundly as the first rays of light were just starting to fall on her face.

It was a breathtaking view of this gorgeous and still very naked goblin girl, and I couldn't help but replay the events of last night over and over.

I'd thought that Kennedi was insatiable at first, but Paulina did more than just give her a run for her money. We had sex almost every hour on the hour for the entire night. By the time it was the wee hours of the morning, I wasn't sure how I had any fluids left inside my body.

Still, I kept cumming. And so did Paulina.

We were both in that weird state of exhaustion where we were dead tired despite not leaving bed since last night. The only bright ray about this was that both Paulina and Kennedi had the day off, so we could sleep for as long as we needed.

So we did. It wasn't until late morning that we finally pulled ourselves out of bed. Paulina went first, standing gloriously nude next to me while she grabbed some clothes to put on. She smiled at me when she started to put her bra on.

"I guess we need to face Kennedi now," she said impishly. "I'm not quite looking forward to this."

"Why's that?" I asked, grabbing a towel so I could hop into the shower. "Not like she doesn't know about us. Or helped you set up your seduction last night."

"I know, but she's going to have so much fun teasing me about it," she replied. "I've known her for so long that I know it's coming."

"You really think so?" I asked.

Paulina nodded vigorously. "Oh, yeah. Wait and see."

I didn't see what Kennedi could have to tease her about, especially since there weren't any secrets in the house. Even still, almost as soon as the door cracked, I could hear music coming from the living room. And yet

another 80s ballad was playing from Kennedi's speakers as we approached.

"I wanna know what love is! I want you to show meeeeeee!"

Kennedi grinned at both of us as she twirled a broom around, holding it up to her mouth only to belt out the lyrics. She flipped her purple hair forward and then whipped it back just as quickly.

"I wanna feel what love is!" she said, outstretching her hands to point at us.

Paulina elbowed me in the side. "See what I mean?"

"The judges are definitely awarding you a point on that one."

Kennedi burst out into a fit of giggles before she turned the music down. "Good morning, lovebirds! Or should I say good afternoon!"

"It's still morning," said a pouty Paulina.

Kennedi hopped over to us and put her arm around both of our necks. "Oh, barely! You two slept so late. Was it a late night, I wonder? Hmm, what could you possibly have been doing?"

Kennedi pointed her finger in the air. "Oh, I know now! You two were *fucking* all night long!"

"You make it sound so crude," said Paulina with a frown. "Besides, I didn't do that to you after the night before."

"Maybe not to Kennedi, but you did it to me," I reminded her. "I remembered that big grin you had on your face when I walked into the kitchen yesterday morning."

Paulina started to turn a dark shade of green. "Oh, right."

Kennedi laughed and hugged Paulina tightly. "My best friend is a woman now. I can't believe it!"

"Hey, I wasn't a virgin," said Paulina, struggling to get out of her embrace.

"You haven't had sex in like four years," said Kennedi. "Trust me, you're practically a virgin. Or *were* a virgin but not anymore thanks to our hunky human boyfriend."

I thought that Paulina would be absorbing most of the brunt of Kennedi's good-natured ribbing, but I wasn't going to get away that easily. Kennedi wrapped her arms around my neck and grinned at me.

"How was it? Was it beautiful?"

I kissed her quickly and maneuvered out of her arms. "Wouldn't you like to know?"

For the first time that morning, a pout developed on her face. "Wait, someone needs to tell me what happened! I need to know the details. Paulina?"

"I think you heard everything you need to know," said Paulina, laughing to herself.

Kennedi crossed her arms. "It's so not fun when I don't get details!"

"Maybe I'll reenact it for you later on if you're good?" I offered, right before stepping into the bathroom.

Kennedi brightened. "You promise?"

I left her waiting as I shut the door, chuckling to myself at my living situation. I spent the next ten minutes taking a shower, though I really didn't want to scrub the smell of Paulina off me. At least it took the smell of chlorine off me though, so it wasn't entirely a loss.

When I changed into my clothes for the day, I saw we had a visitor.

"Kevin, hurry!" said Kennedi. "Sadie brought the new video over. You have to see this!"

Kennedi dragged me to Paulina's room, where I found her and Sadie sitting at the computer. I could hear sound in the background as the commercial played.

". . . and here at Goblin Girl Maid Service, our clients come first. Our staff has been carefully selected to only deliver the highest quality results, so that your home is always tidy and clean."

Sadie met my eyes first, and she beamed with a grin. "Hey, Kevin! Come see this!"

When my eyes finally fell on the screen, they rewound the video clip to start from the very beginning. I could see the lovely footage of Paulina that I took yesterday, except now it looked like it wasn't shot from a cheap video camera. It was also interspersed with the before-and-after picture examples that we sent over as well, creating a very professional end result.

By the time it was over, I was grinning from ear to ear.

"That was wonderful, Sadie!" I said, hugging her from behind. "You did an incredible job!"

"Well, it helps when you're given good material to start with," she said modestly. "My home laptop still gave me the usual amount of difficulty, but your clips were great, and all I did was edit out the background noise and put in the pictures. I really like the end result, and I think it will look great on the website. Look here, I already put it up."

Sure enough, the website looked like the real deal now. I couldn't get over how great it looked, and how much it had already improved since I first saw it.

Paulina looked even happier than I did. She was like a kid on Christmas morning, seeing that pile of presents under the tree.

"It's exactly what we needed to take GGMS to the next level!" she said, putting her hands together. "I can't wait to see the results once I start applying again!"

"Uh oh," said Kennedi, putting her hand against her face. "I know that look. Come on, Paulina, it's the weekend. You don't need to do any work right now."

Now that Kennedi had pointed it out, I could see exactly what she was talking about. It was Paulina's day off, and she was about to log in and apply for every post she could find on the forum. That determined glint in her eye wasn't going to go away any time soon.

"Why don't we have a nice, leisurely breakfast?" I suggested. "My treat. I can fix up something really good.

Sadie snickered. "Don't you mean lunch?"

Kennedi touched Sadie's arm. "Trust me. For them, it's closer to breakfast."

I didn't want to open that can of worms again, so I kept my eyes trained on Paulina. "Come on? Have breakfast?"

"Maybe in a little while," she said, already logging onto the forum.

I opened my mouth to say something, but Kennedi grabbed my arm and shook my head. "It's like trying to wake the dead. Trust me, I've tried. You're better off just letting her get to it. Let her apply for the next hour or so, and she'll burn herself out."

By the looks of it, Kennedi knew it was a lost cause. I knew how dedicated Paulina was, so I decided to let her go. Besides, she would get hungry eventually.

"Okay, but find us something good, Paulina," I said, right before we left her room.

She smiled and flashed us a thumbs-up but not before Kennedi squeezed my hand.

"So about that breakfast?" she asked, her eyes all lit up.

An hour later, Sadie, Kennedi, and I all retired to Kennedi's room after eating a massive breakfast/early lunch.

I'd gone all out with my cooking. Pancakes, sausage, waffles, bacon, scrambled eggs, and toast were made for all of us—enough that we would be eating the leftovers for the rest of the day. It was exactly what I needed to fuel up after last night's sex marathon with Paulina.

Speaking of, Paulina had been shut in her room ever since we left. I had no doubt that there wasn't a penthouse or apartment building in all of Dragonmont City who hadn't seen an application from Goblin Girl Maid Service that morning. I hoped she wasn't biting off more than she could chew, but I also knew just how much was riding on her shoulders.

Even Sadie seemed to notice just how dedicated Paulina was.

“Does Paulina ever take a break?” asked the redheaded goblin as Kennedi passed her a controller. “She seems even more obsessed with work than my old boss. And he was a crusty old curmudgeon!”

Kennedi groaned. “You don’t know the half of it. Obsessed is a good way to put it. I can’t fault her. She’s my best friend, but I wish she’d stop and smell the flowers every once in a while. That’s why I was hoping that after last night, she might be more relaxed today.”

“Why’s that?” asked Sadie. “So what really happened last night?”

“Paulina and Kevin were knocking boots all night,” said Kennedi, as casually as if she’d just announced that we watched a movie together.

I knew things were different in this world, but I still blushed at how casual everything was, especially when it came to goblin girls. Whereas any human girl would definitely get mad if her best friend was also sleeping with her boyfriend, goblin girls seemed to *prefer* it that way.

“Oh, *fun*!” said Sadie, grinning at me. “How was it?”

“It was really nice,” I said, trying to find the best words to describe it without giving away too much.

“Psh, it was so much more than fun,” said Kennedi. “I caught the matinee of that show. It was absolutely spectacular.”

Sadie started to laugh. “Kevin has certainly been busy.”

“Oh yes, he has,” leered Kennedi.

“Hey, I’m right here you know,” I said, feeling defensive.

Kennedi scooted closer to me and kissed me lovingly. “I know. You’re amazing. I can’t help but sing your praises. Which reminds me, you’re going to be in my bed tonight, okay? I was *so* jealous listening to Paulina cum like crazy when I was wound up tighter than a spring.”

“That does sound nice,” muttered Sadie.

I turned my head to look at Sadie, not surprised to see her watching me very closely. I was still getting used to this world but at that moment, I realized it wouldn’t have taken much for Sadie to be invited into the group.

In fact, it probably would have been celebrated.

We started to play more vintage N64, this time playing *GoldenEye* multiplayer for a change. Of course, we played with the Golden Gun, and the hunt soon began to find it before the others.

“So Sadie, how is your schooling going?” asked Kennedi as we started to play. “Still liking computer science?”

“For now, I guess,” answered Sadie, who was currently shooting at me with her AK-47 while I ran into another room. “Sometimes I think I picked the wrong field of study.”

“Why’s that, Sadie?” I asked, shooting at her with my PPK and killing her.

“I don’t know. It’s just that it ties me to the computer a lot,” she said. “That was one thing I liked about working at the store. It let me be active. I could move around all day, and it helped to make the time go faster than moonshine in the summertime! My butt gets sore like crazy when I sit at the computer for too long.”

“Maybe you need one of those standing desks,” suggested Kennedi, who had found the Golden Gun already and was now proceeding to hunt us both down. “You know, put some blood flow back in your butt!”

“Yeah, maybe,” she said. “It’s not that I’m uninterested in it. I just think that I’ve been studying it for too long. I wouldn’t mind a break.”

“You could always take a semester off or something,” I said. “Come back to it when you’re recharged?”

Sadie smiled. “Yeah, maybe. Oh, fuck! Kennedi!”

Kennedi giggled as we both watched Sadie’s screen turn red. “I’m afraid you’ve shot your last bullet, Mr. Bond!”

It was a scene that played out a few more times over the next thirty minutes. Sadie wasn’t very good at FPS games, and we quit when she started to get frustrated.

“Okay, what other games do you have?” she asked, moving toward Kennedi’s pile. “Oh, you have the original *Gran Turismo 4* for Playstation 2? I used to love that game! Can we play?”

I watched as Kennedi winced. A look of profound sadness appeared on her face. “Sorry, I don’t have my PS2 anymore.”

“Why’s that?” asked Sadie. “Did you sell it?”

Kennedi winced again. At that moment, I remembered what Paulina had said about that time they used a loan shark. They’d gotten so into debt that they had to give away Kennedi’s consoles just to get even again.

“Maybe we should try something else,” I said, giving Kennedi a knowing look. “You still want to race, Sadie? How about *Mario Kart*?”

Before Sadie could answer, the door to Kennedi’s room came crashing open. I saw Paulina nearly shrieking with excitement as she barreled into me, kissing all over my face before I even knew what was going on.

“We did it, we did it! We did it!” she shouted with sheer joy in between kisses.

“What did we do?” asked Kennedi cautiously. “I never admit to anything until I know what it is!”

“Our bid was accepted!” shouted Paulina. “One of them at least! But it’s a big one. A very big one. One that could take away our money problems for the foreseeable future!”

“That’s wonderful,” said Sadie. “Who is it, Paulina?”

“It’s the Beauman Hotel,” she explained. “You’ve all seen that building downtown. It’s the one that looks like it has wings on the top! With the gargoyles too!”

I was still new to the city, but even I knew which one she was talking about. I’d seen it on my first day, thinking the building looked about as majestic as they came. That entire section of downtown had such a regal quality to it, even down to the name.

“But a hotel though?” asked Kennedi. “Hotels aren’t really our thing, Polly.”

“No, not all of it is a hotel,” explained Paulina. “The bottom floors are a hotel, but once you get closer to the top, it becomes a series of very posh residences for fairies. There are fifteen floors of penthouses, each of which spans an entire floor.”

“Fifteen you said?” asked Kennedi. “That’s right in the sweet spot!”

“What’s the sweet spot?” I asked.

“We try not to apply for anything that has more than twenty units,” said Paulina. “Anything more than that is too much for two people to handle. And we get disqualified if we don’t have the help working before we make the bid, remember?”

“Ah, I got it now.”

Paulina started shaking my hand excitedly. “This is huge! I put in the application, and I just got word that it moved to the next round!”

“So what happens now then?” asked Sadie. “Does that mean it’s accepted? When is your start date?”

“I’m not sure,” said Paulina. “Sometimes they ask for more details before they give that to you. Sometimes they just tell you when you start. I’ll keep a watch on our email to see what else pops in. Either way, this is amazing. In the note they sent back to me, they said they loved our website!”

Now I knew why so much of her excitement seemed to be directed at me. She hugged me tighter, looking at me with glimmering eyes when it was over.

“This is all your influence,” she said. “We wouldn’t be here without you!”

I chuckled. “I just helped a little. I just had to pull back the curtain so the rest of the world could see how great this company was.”

Paulina leaned up on her toes to kiss me. “And we’re going to keep showing them just that! I still can’t believe this. The Beauman Hotel is the white whale. This could be the turning point where everything changes!”

“I might even need to hire an assistant now,” said Kennedi, holding out her hand. “And maybe even my own personal dragon for transportation!”

Sadie giggled. “Getting just a *tiny* bit ahead of yourself, are you?”

Kennedi pursed her lips. “Well, I could really use an assistant.”

We all laughed at her for a moment until Paulina gave me one more kiss and went to leave. I grabbed her hand suddenly.

“No, wait, now you need to stay,” I urged. “Especially now that your hard work is paying off. Here.” I handed her a controller.

Paulina looked at the controller and bit her lip. “But I really should keep monitoring our emails.”

I decided to draw a firm line. “Paulina, if you leave that room to go back to work, then we’re going to break up.”

I was half-joking as I said it, wanting to make her laugh more than anything. But behind me, I could hear both Sadie and Kennedi gasp like I’d just cussed out their best friend.

Paulina looked at me with a hurt expression. “You really mean that, Kevin?”

“No, of course not,” I said, laughing to show her I was joking. “But I want you to stay, and you’ve done enough today. I was just trying to get your attention.”

“Hey, that’s a good tactic,” said Kennedi, positioning herself near the door. “You hear that, Paulina? No more work today or I fucking quit!”

Paulina gave her a weird look and giggled.

“Yeah, no more work today, Paulina,” said Sadie, jumping in. “Or I’ll take down your website! And bill you a thousand bronze opals!”

We were all laughing now before Kennedi kicked it up a notch.

“If you exit out that door right now, I’ll slit your fucking throat, Paulina.”

“Whoa!” I said, putting up my hand. Paulina stopped laughing as we all stared at Kennedi.

Kennedi winced. “Too much?”

“Yeah, just a little,” I said.

“Sorry!”

I turned back toward Paulina. “You see how we all feel. So why don’t you park your butt right here on the couch and play a little *Mario Kart* with us? We’ll even let you have a head start on the first race.”

I could tell Kennedi was about to protest that but to my surprise, Paulina gave in.

“Okay, fine,” she said. “Let me just turn off my computer and I’ll play with you.”

“Finally,” I said, grinning from ear to ear.

Paulina excused herself for a second while Kennedi watched the door. “Was that all I needed to do to get her to stay? I’ve been doing it all wrong for years!”

We laughed at that as we waited for Paulina to come back. I was hoping for us to have a very chill afternoon, but when Paulina appeared at the door minutes later, her expression had changed completely.

She couldn’t have looked more miserable.

“Everything’s ruined!” she said. “We’re totally screwed!”

Chapter Seventeen

It took us a minute to get it all out of her. Paulina was on the verge of hyperventilating before she finally spoke the words.

“They just sent me the formal application for employment,” she said as she sniffled.

“What’s so wrong about that?” asked Sadie. “They accepted our bid, didn’t they?”

“They did, but now they want names and data about the business,” explained Paulina. “That’s not the worst thing about it though. I looked at the details of the application. They want at least *three* maids to be working here before we can be fully accepted.”

I could see Kennedi’s shoulders slump once she heard that. Hell, even mine did. It was the same kind of bullshit they’d run into before. They couldn’t get bids for bigger places without having more maids, but they couldn’t hire more maids until they got larger bids.

Classic catch-22.

“So what are we going to do?” asked Kennedi. “Can we still submit it anyway with only two of us?”

“It won’t let me move forward without entering three names,” said Paulina, wiping her eyes.

“What if we put Kevin’s name down?” suggested Kennedi.

“I don’t think I’d look very good in a maid outfit,” I said. “But I’d still do it if you needed me to.”

“Maids can only be women,” explained Paulina. “The fairies don’t want any male maids. Not that the idea didn’t already occur to me, but we’d be disqualified right away once they saw your name was Kevin and not Kevina.”

We were in a bind now, and the entire mood inside the duplex had completely changed. All the optimism was gone, only to be replaced by a sense of impending doom.

Somehow, it was worse that this was happening after the website was completed. It was like we couldn’t escape our fate, like the business was just doomed to fail.

Kennedi put her arm around Paulina’s shoulders. “We can keep applying. There are jobs out there for us. We just have to find them.”

“Yeah, single apartment jobs,” sniffled Paulina. “The kind that pay peanuts. The kind that we can’t live on either.”

I was about to console her when something happened that I didn’t expect.

“What if you had a third maid right now?” asked Sadie quietly. “What if I helped you?”

Kennedi rebounded on her friend so quickly that I think it shocked all of us. I had a hard time containing my grin as Kennedi squeezed the life out of her old friend.

“You would do that for us? Really? No take-backs?”

Sadie giggled. “I still need a job, remember? And it’s not hard to see that y’all are great people. Why shouldn't I help?”

Kennedi hugged her again, and then in her happiness, she hugged my neck, making me laugh at the intensity.

The only person who wasn’t showing any happiness still was Paulina.

“I can’t afford to pay you right now though,” she said, as tears still welled in her eyes. “Not at least until we secure the contract. And that means you’d be working without pay for at least the first week.”

That was a tough bargain, but I could tell that Sadie wasn’t the type that was easily swayed. She put on a determined look and let her accent shine in its full glory.

“Well, I ain’t about to abandon y’all when you need me the most!” she said, planting her hands on her hips. “When the fields need harvestin’, you best get your butt on that tractor!”

“What does that even mean?” asked Kennedi.

Sadie giggled. “It means I’m in, damnit!”

“And I’m in too,” I said, offering my solidarity to Sadie.

“You better believe if my boyfriend and my childhood best friend are in, then so am I,” said Kennedi.

All three of us looked at Paulina. She didn’t look so upset anymore, but I could tell that she was wondering if this was real. We’d put our hands together, like that scrappy team that finally learned how to play together.

All we needed now was our leader.

Paulina didn’t keep us waiting long. “Okay, let’s do this!”

I don’t think Paulina was truly calm until after the application was fully submitted with Sadie’s name. She breathed a sigh of relief after she hit send, and then I saw her slump back in her chair.

“So what happens now?” asked Sadie. “When do we find out we get the job?”

“Maybe in an hour or maybe by tonight,” replied Paulina. “These usually go quickly once you get past the initial stage. I just hope they don’t sit on it for a few days!”

“No way,” said Kennedi, waving her hand. “We’re the best there is! They’re going to hire us right away. You’ve gotta think positive thoughts, Polly.”

“I’m a little short of positive thoughts right now,” admitted the dark-haired beauty.

Paulina definitely needed a pick-me-up. I could tell, and so could Kennedi, that she needed something to lift her spirits. Thankfully, Kennedi knew exactly what she needed.

She pulled Paulina to her feet. “I have an idea. How about we take a break from the computer and let’s do something fun. Who’s in the mood for zander nut cookies?”

Paulina’s entire demeanor changed at the drop of a hat. I didn’t know what the hell a zander nut was, but judging by Paulina’s expression, they were

as good as gold.

“You mean it?” she asked Kennedi. “You’ll really make them for me?”

Kennedi grinned. “I mean, as long as you promise to loan me Kevin for tonight, then sure!”

Paulina opened her mouth to protest but Kennedi poked her before any words came out. “I’m kidding. I’ll make them for you regardless. But I still want Kevin tonight. I’m horny. Just sayin’.”

Both Sadie and I thought this exchange was pretty comical, and I could see I wasn’t the only one who didn’t know what a zander nut was.

“Okay, fill me in,” said Sadie. “What makes zander nuts so special? I’ve never heard of ‘em!”

“They only grow in a very remote part of Vinaria,” said Kennedi. “Far to the south of here. They can be expensive to buy unless you know where to go to purchase them direct. Either way, they taste freaking incredible.”

“She’s understating that too,” said Paulina. “They taste better than freaking incredible. They taste like a mouth orgasm.”

“Yeah, a full-body one!” added Kennedi, shivering for added effect. “They give you the tingles!”

Sadie was now very interested. “So when can we make them?”

Kennedi grabbed their hands. “Follow me to the kitchen!”

Once Kennedi reached the kitchen, she was practically on autopilot. We watched as she started rolling dough, adding copious amounts of sugar and these tiny, sparkling green zander nuts before sliding them into the oven a half hour later.

The baking time was pretty short. After ten minutes, she opened the door with her adorable oven mitts and pulled out the first batch.

“Do they need to cool first?” asked Sadie, already eyeing the cookies. “Or can we just dig in?”

“Nah, no cooling at all,” said Kennedi, using a spatula to free them from the cookie sheet. “The zander nut breaks open during the baking process and helps to keep it together. I like these so much better than any other

type of cookie, which usually falls apart if you take it off the sheet too soon."

Within a minute, I had a large zander nut cookie in my hand. It was warm to the touch, and the smell of sugary sweetness made me want to devour it. I saw that Sadie was also appraising it carefully, and we raised the cookies to our lips at the same time.

Up to this point in my life, I loved cookies just as much as the next guy. I loved eating them, especially whenever they magically appeared at the office I worked at, or when my now-deceased aunt used to make them for a special occasion.

I couldn't live off them, of course. They were good but not *that* good. Still, I felt like I knew exactly what to expect from any cookie out there.

That was until I took that first bite of that zander nut cookie.

Now I knew why Kennedi and Paulina described it as a full-body orgasm. Almost immediately, the sweet taste of that cookie spread warm feelings of satisfaction throughout my entire body. I felt everything brilliantly—the sugary taste made its way to my stomach and spread out like a generator to all my limbs.

I felt almost euphoric. Like I could conquer the world but my life was too good to expend the effort. I even found that it made me just a little hard too, with blood rushing into my cock.

Judging by the flushed expression on Sadie's face and the way her thighs were squeezing together, she was dealing with a similar problem.

"That tastes like cookie crack!" exclaimed Sadie, devouring another bite. "Sweet glorious heavens, I need another bite!"

I wasn't far behind her. I shoved the rest of the cookie in my mouth and nearly swallowed it whole. I could see Kennedi and Paulina doing the same with theirs until we were one satisfied bunch seconds later.

"As good as usual, Kennedi," said Paulina, her eyes closed as she savored every bite. "So good that it hurts."

Kennedi licked some crumbs off her fingers. "Aren't zander nuts the best? Seriously, nothing even comes close to comparing with them!"

Paulina grinned and elbowed Kennedi in the side. “You’re leaving out the best part. Tell them!”

“Let me guess,” said Sadie, groaning as she had another bite. “They go straight to my ass? Is eating one cookie like having a full-course meal or something?”

Kennedi giggled. “Not even close. The best part about zander nut cookies is that you can eat as many as you want without getting sick, and you won’t gain an ounce! If anything, they’re kinda like diet food.”

Now that was something! I thought of all the people still stuck on Earth or would give their right arm to have amazing cookies that doubled as healthy food. Especially when I looked at the trim and slender figures of these gorgeous goblin girls.

“If you two are the picture of eating copious amounts of zander nut cookies, then I think we have the makings of another business,” I said, only half joking.

“One business at a time,” said Paulina, taking another bite. “But this is exactly what I needed to perk me up. Thanks so much, Kennedi!”

“Love you, Polly,” replied Kennedi, hugging her best friend.

The cookies definitely turned around our mood. We had all the makings of a great afternoon, and Kennedi even invited Sadie to stay for dinner, especially since she was part of the business now.

Before we could have dinner, I heard Paulina’s phone ring. We all gave each other the ‘oh shit’ look as Paulina ran to grab the phone. She picked up and started talking right away.

“Yes, this is her. Uh huh. Yes. No, we understand. Tomorrow? Yes, we can make it. Uh huh. Yes. That’s fine. Thank you!”

I didn’t know what to make of just what I could hear, and Paulina’s face was mostly unreadable as she hung up the phone.

“Well?” asked Kennedi with excitement. “Dish it out! What did they say?”

Paulina gave us a weary smile. “Our application was accepted so we made it past the biggest hurdle.”

“And we start tomorrow?” asked Sadie suddenly.

“No, we have another requirement we need to meet before we get the job,” said Paulina. “They want us to attend a meeting with the board that runs the building.”

“A board meeting?” I replied. “What the hell for? Why can’t they just give us the job?”

“Because there’s another finalist,” admitted Paulina quietly. “This isn’t so much a board meeting as it is a run-off meeting. They explained that they liked the applications for both companies so much that they wanted to meet us. They’ll make their decision once they get the full approval of the board of which company to hire.”

My shoulders fell forward, and so did Sadie’s. I was beginning to understand why Paulina was so stressed all the time.

Maid service was a very cutthroat business.

“So if we pass the run-off meeting, we get the job?” asked Sadie.

“We do, but it has to be a unanimous vote,” explained Paulina. “So we better hope that whoever else made it this far isn’t as good.”

“Psh, who else could be as good as us?” asked Kennedi. “Nobody else stands a chance!”

I liked Kennedi’s confidence, but I could tell that Paulina didn’t share it. She was already biting her lip, and it seemed like she was already stressed again.

“It’s just a run-off meeting,” I said, taking Paulina into my arms and kissing her gently. That seemed to help, and I felt her lose some of that tension. “We’ve made so much progress in the last couple days. I know they’ll see that we’re a good fit. You just gotta have a little faith.”

“Yeah?” asked Paulina as she stared back at me. Despite only saying one word, we had an entire conversation with our eyes.

She needed that reassurance now that we were still in the game. That we weren’t going to lose in the bottom of the ninth because of a home run.

I had no idea if that was going to be the case. Being reborn here didn’t give me powers of foresight, but I also knew when someone needed me to put on a brave face.

And that time was now.

“Totally,” I said. “I believe in us. Tomorrow, we’re going to make them believe too.”

She actually smiled. It was just what she needed to hear.

“Tomorrow then,” she said. “We can do this.”

There was the Paulina I knew and loved—the serious but stunning goblin girl that could take on the world if she wanted to.

She was back.

“I only have one question,” asked Sadie moments later. “When are y’all going to give me my own maid outfit?”

Later on that evening, I was ready to turn in early. I’d been sucked into the emotional roller coaster of running a business, and more than anything I wanted to go to bed and have a better day tomorrow. I knew we had our run-off meeting early at nine o’clock, so my entire plan revolved around getting a great night’s sleep before giving it my all in the morning.

Best laid plans had rarely gone worse. I’d no sooner turned off the light in my room only to find it on again, with a smiling Kennedi standing at my door.

“No sleeping yet,” she said, rushing over to my bed. “I need your help!”

My eyes were still closed, but I opened them only reluctantly. “Kennedi, I’m trying to get some sleep. I’m really tired.”

“You can sleep later,” she insisted, pulling my arm so that I followed her. “Besides, I need your help. You can't ignore me in my time of need, can you?”

I opened my eyes to look at her. She was only wearing a very short robe—the kind that was so sheer that it was practically see-through. It was blue in color with gold around the trimmings, giving Kennedi an almost regal quality.

“Okay, fine,” I said, finding my body awakening once again at the mere sight of her. I followed Kennedi back to her room, where she had the closet light on. She moved toward the mirror and then turned around to face me.

“I need you to tell me which suit you like best,” she said, grinning at me as she untied her robe.

I watched as the luxurious material fell away from her shoulders, moving so slowly that it felt like time stopped. I caught my breath as I watched it slide down her skin until it landed on the floor seconds later.

She wasn’t naked, but this was the next best thing. Instead, I could see Kennedi wearing that fabled leopard-print bikini she told me about the other day.

“Sweet baby Jesus,” I muttered as I took in her flawless body. I loved the way the print seemed to mold to her skin. It gave her an exotic look princess look, especially with her hair worn to one side.

“You didn’t think I forgot about giving you that bikini fashion show, did you?” she asked, fluttering her eyelashes at me.

“I umm—no, no, I didn’t,” I stammered.

Kennedi grabbed a chair from her vanity and put it right next to the mirror. She pulled me by the arm until I was sitting down, at which point she pulled her leg up to rest against my thigh.

“What do you think?” she asked breathily. “Is it a keeper?”

Words escaped me. I didn’t know how to properly communicate how hot she looked so I nodded instead.

She giggled. “What’s wrong? Ogre got your tongue? How does my bikini rate on the cock scale?”

“What’s the cock scale?”

Before I knew what was happening, Kennedi had fallen to her knees. She pulled my shorts all the way down, exposing my rapidly-hardening cock to her eyes. I watched as she went into a trance like the first time she saw it.

“So sexy,” she whispered, giving it a quick squeeze. “And you’re getting pretty hard!”

“It’s really difficult not to get turned on when you look like that,” I admitted.

“Let’s see just how far we can take this,” she said, spreading her arms wide and prancing back to her closet. “Okay, no peeking! I have another for you.”

She closed the door, leaving me with a mostly erect cock while I listened to her hum behind the door. I found it funny how quickly I forgot about going to sleep, but when a hot goblin girl wants you to judge the sexiness of her bikinis, you take her up on the offer without a second thought otherwise.

When Kennedi emerged next, she was wearing a dark-green bikini that had a top which was more halter than the one before it. It was extremely-thin material, and the color of it was such a close match to her skin that I thought she was nude at first.

“How about something a bit more . . . sensual,” purred Kennedi, trailing her fingers along her exposed side, leaving a trail of goosebumps in her wake. “What do you think? Better than the leopard-print? Or not quite as good?”

I bit my lip. Before I could draw blood, I replaced it with my knuckle. “Yes. Just yes.”

Kennedi giggled. “Yes to what? Yes, it’s better than the leopard-print? Or yes, it’s not quite as good?”

“Just yes to everything,” I said. “You are the hottest woman I’ve ever seen. Just yes. I don’t care if you came out here wearing a garbage bag, you’d still be piping hot.”

I loved the look that she gave me in response. It wasn’t a look of lust as much as it was of love. She moved closer until our lips came together.

“If you keep saying such nice things to me, you’re going to fill me with your cum before you go to sleep tonight.”

“Still yes!”

Kennedi giggled. “And it looks like this bikini scores very high on the cock scale! But the biggest question is will it get the highest score?”

She didn’t wait around for me to respond before jumping back into the closet. As for me, I didn’t need to see another bikini. If I stood up right now, I would have pointed the way forward anywhere I walked. The loss of blood to my brain was already starting to affect my speech, but it was the last bikini that Kennedi changed into that truly put me at a loss for words.

Skimpy was one way to describe this new suit, but even that didn’t seem to do it justice. I saw more of Kennedi than it covered, even to the point that I could vaguely make out the bumps of her nipples. Even the bottoms were less of a thong than they were just pieces of string held together by a little bit of nylon and sheer hope. I could make out her clit as well as the rough contours of her lips.

To make matters even better, Kennedi moved directly in front of me, turned around, and then bent over to touch her toes. The gesture made her ass pop, filling my vision with the sweetest, roundest, most perfect derriere in existence.

I couldn’t help myself. I reached out and squeezed it just because I wanted to.

“Oh my,” squealed Kennedi, laughing to herself when she felt my fingers. “Finally, I get what I wanted!”

“What’s that?” I asked. “You wanted me to lose control?”

“Uh duh! What do you think this was all about?”

Hearing that, I didn’t care about anything else. I grabbed her by the arm and pulled it down until she was straddling my lap. My cock was between her legs now. Any other bottoms might have prevented what came next, but the lack of fabric on this bikini meant that the tip of my cock notched right next to her lips.

She let out a throaty giggle as she rested her arms against my shoulders. “So which bikini do you like best? One, two or three—”

“All of the above,” I interrupted. “Don’t show me anymore though. I don’t think my heart can take it.”

“I think that can be arranged,” she said, tracing her finger along my jaw. “But you need to do something for me first.”

“Anything.”

Kennedi raised up on her heels and slipped her hand between us. She shifted the last string of her bottoms out of the way and then sat down, driving me into her body.

“I need you to be intimate with me. Please?”

It was a surprisingly sweet request, one that I was happy to honor.

“It would be my pleasure.”

Chapter Eighteen

I woke up the next morning still tangled with Kennedi.

Last night was a total blur of activity. I couldn't remember how long Kennedi and I had sex, but it was probably close to an hour. During that time, we had more orgasms that I could count, and when it was all over, we were sleeping in a matter of minutes.

She quite literally drained the life out of me.

I was worried about being too tired for today, but there was a surprising amount of spring in my step as I hopped out of bed and took a quick shower.

By the time I was dressed, I could see Kennedi already stirring, and I could smell something cooking in the kitchen. As soon as I entered, I found Paulina at the stove cooking eggs, already wearing her maid outfit.

"Good morning!" she said brightly, kissing me before resuming her attention to the eggs. "Are you ready to kick butt in this run-off meeting?"

I saw a stack of toast near the stove, and I took one, biting it aggressively. "I was born ready. This job is as good as ours!"

Paulina giggled. "And you even have Kennedi out of bed before eight. That's some kind of miracle!"

"Don't be talking smack," said Kennedi, yawning as she made her entrance into the kitchen. "It's not my fault Kevin rocked my world until late in the evening."

Technically, it *was* her fault, but now wasn't the time to argue.

The three of us ate breakfast quickly before putting the finishing touches on preparing for the meeting. We were going to link up with Sadie right before we got to the hotel, but we needed to be sure we were there promptly for nine.

It was a busy morning as soon as we stepped out of the duplex. The streets and sidewalks were dominated by business types, making their way downtown to go to work. The only difference between now and a normal

Earth rush hour is that mostly everyone here looked *happy* to go to work. It was almost like their jobs were self-fulfilling or something like that.

No wonder this place was so fantastical compared to Earth!

Even with all the foot traffic, we made it to the Beauman Hotel with plenty of time to spare. We even hooked up easily with Sadie, who looked so cute but so out-of-place in her maid outfit waiting by the door.

Kennedi grabbed Paulina by the arm. “Don’t they just grow up so fast? It seems like you just meet them and then all of a sudden, they’re out the door ready for their first job!”

Sadie planted both hands on her hips. “Are you making fun of me already?”

Kennedi let go of Paulina’s arm and wrapped her arms around Sadie. “I wouldn’t dream of it!”

“Good, ‘cause I’ll sock you in the mouth if you start,” said Sadie, her voice muffled by Kennedi’s shoulder.

“What do you think?” asked Paulina. “The outfit looks like it fits well! Are you ready to do this?”

“It’s so funny,” said Sadie, grinning from ear to ear. “I get just as many looks in this maid outfit as I did in my bikini at the hot tub store. This outfit screams ‘look at me!’”

“Yes, it certainly does,” I muttered, taking a moment to appreciate just how good Sadie looked in hers. She noticed me staring and smiled at me.

“It says we have to go up to the sixtieth floor,” said Paulina. “And to check in with the front desk girl. So let’s go up.”

“Lead the way, skipper,” said Kennedi.

I had to admit—the interior of the Beauman Hotel was fancy. Even more than fancy, it was sheer elegance. I could see high ceilings everywhere I went, magnificent paintings on the walls, and even fine carpets on the floor. The Beauman Hotel was where the upper crust lived, and it definitely showed.

Even the elevator was fancy in that there was a permanent attendant just to push the buttons for you.

“Sixtieth floor, coming right up,” said the attendant after we all piled in. He looked completely humorless doing his job, but then again, my experience with these types told me that was usually the case.

“Think I can get him to let me push all the buttons?” whispered Kennedi once we were riding up.

“Kennedi!” hissed Paulina. “Behave yourself. We have a job to do!”

Kennedi pursed her lips. “Oh, right!”

She started humming to pass the time, which was only a little better, especially when I recognized the tune as being a highly-annoying music video that was very viral back on Earth. Finally, I had to say something.

“Can you stop rickrolling all of us please?”

“What’s a rickroll?”

“Remind me to show you later,” I muttered, shaking my head. “Of all the places to start singing Rick Astley.”

Paulina hit Kennedi with another glare, which was enough to keep her quiet until we reached the door. When the elevator dinged, I could tell we were in some kind of lobby again.

This time though, it was a lobby for the upper floors of penthouses. This area was every bit as opulent as downstairs, if not more so, but we had the added benefit of being extremely high up this time.

Led by Paulina, we made our way over to the front desk where there was a young elf girl who smiled at us. Paulina checked us in, and we were directed to sit in a small waiting area just off to our right.

That would have been fine, except the waiting area was already occupied by five of the ugliest creatures I’d ever seen in my life.

They were dwarves by the looks of them. Short, ugly creatures with stout, powerful bodies and big hands—they barely came up to my neck before they topped out in height. Each of them was wearing a similar uniform

that included a gray-colored smock with a hat that fit snugly over their heads.

They would have looked cute all dressed in the same way but that was before I looked at their faces. They were all marked with deep lines running all along their cheeks and forehead. Most of their faces were covered with pimples and boils, and they had the kind of long beards that would have made Gandalf extremely proud.

Each of them was holding some kind of cleaning toolkit, outfitted with a broom, duster, mop, cleaning wipes, and many more items wrapped up securely in one package.

It was obvious they were our competition, but as I looked at them, one startling question came to mind.

I leaned closer to Paulina. “Uh, Paulina? I thought you said men couldn’t be maids here?”

She raised an eyebrow. “Yeah, that’s right. What of it?”

I nodded toward the dwarves. “How do you explain them?”

“Kevin, those are women.”

Those might have been the most shocking four words I ever heard, at least put together in the same sentence. I had to do a double and then a triple-take to confirm what Paulina had said.

If they were women, they were without a doubt the *ugliest* women I’d ever laid eyes on.

And when they saw us, all hell broke loose.

“Well, look what the troll dragged in,” said the one that was clearly the leader, mostly because she seemed bigger than the others. “Still doing maid service, Paulina? I would have thought you would have been out of business months ago.”

The other dwarves sneered behind her, and one even started smacking her knee in amusement.

Judging by the look on Paulina’s face, I could tell she wasn’t about to engage with these jerks, but her best friend had no such qualms.

“Oh, *hell* no,” said Kennedi, marching right over to the dwarves. “Still got all those boils on your face, Esther? I would have thought you’d gotten some acne medication months ago!”

Esther reached up to touch her boils subconsciously, and then she glared at Kennedi. “So what gives? Why are you scabs here?”

“We’re here to win this business,” said Kennedi. “Which shouldn’t be too hard, considering the competition.”

“You forget what happened last time you went head-to-head with us,” replied Esther, as she elbowed the dwarf right next to her. “Do you remember what happened, Enid? I do!”

Both dwarves started laughing before Enid spoke up. “I’m just surprised they still call it maid service! I’ve never seen anything like it in my life. I can’t believe people actually *pay* you.”

I felt Kennedi winding up to go another round, but Paulina grabbed her arm, stopping her before so much as a word came out.

“What do you want, Esther?” asked Paulina sharply. “Nobody here is asking for trouble, so why does it have to be an ordeal every time we see each other?”

Esther scoffed. “I just think these jobs should be reserved for actual companies. Don’t get me wrong—it’s really cute when you pretend to be a business. It looks like you’ve even hired some more help this time around.”

Esther’s attention turned toward me, and I could see her lip curl upward as she appraised me from head to toe.

“But it still doesn’t change facts,” continued Esther. “You’re a third-rate maid service. You’re not going to win today.”

“You can believe anything you want,” said Kennedi. “It’s just going to make it that much more satisfying when we beat you.”

“Beat *us*?” mocked Enid, looking back at the rest of her group and laughing. “Did you hear that? They think they can beat us!”

The situation was devolving rapidly, and I was afraid that it was going to turn physical very soon. Kennedi tried to move forward to get in their

faces—a move that was reciprocated by Esther and Enid.

Thankfully, Paulina had a cooler head. She grabbed Kennedi's arm and started to lead her back to the lobby, putting a separation between the two groups.

And Kennedi wasn't happy about it.

"Paulina!" she hissed. "What did you do that for! I'm not going to hit them, I promise!"

"I know, I know," said Paulina quickly. "I just can't stand them. I don't want any of us to be around them any longer than necessary."

"What's the deal with that group?" I asked.

"Yeah, there's obviously some history there between you and those dwarf ladies," added Sadie.

Paulina took a deep breath. "I run into them a lot. That would be bad enough, except they're the snootiest bunch of dwarves I've ever met. They've been in business for five years, and they have a long list of clients—most of them here downtown. Every time they land a new job, Esther's head gets a little bigger."

"So does her beard," I muttered. "Why don't they shave that off? It's very off-putting."

All three women looked at me like I was weird.

"Dwarves can't shave their beards off, silly," said Sadie. "It grows back right away."

"How unfortunate for them. It makes them all look like men."

"They might look like men, but they're a well-oiled machine," said Paulina. "They're the very best when it comes to competition." She hung her head. "I've never won a bid when they've been involved. They've beaten me every time."

"*Until* now," stressed Kennedi. "We have something they don't!"

"We do?" asked Sadie.

Kennedi nodded eagerly. "We have Kevin!"

I appreciated the vote of confidence, but I wasn't sure how I could help overcome this problem. I hadn't seen the dwarves in action yet, and I trusted Paulina when she said they would be a formidable foe.

"I know we have Kevin," said Paulina, smiling at me while her hand sought mine. "But there's also a perception problem here that we all have to be aware of."

"Perception of what?" asked Sadie.

"We're going up against *dwarves*," explained Paulina. "Dwarves have a reputation for being tidy and clean. Just like dragons are preferred for taxi service, dwarves are preferred for maid service. Let's just say there aren't many other goblins doing maid service in Dragonmont City, so we have an uphill battle to fight."

"They also have reputations for being royal bitches," muttered Kennedi. "Something we should all keep in mind."

"This is true," replied Paulina. "They might be good maids, but they are difficult to work with. We can use this to our advantage if we play it right."

"We're not out of this yet," I said. "Let's keep our heads up, stay confident, and let's make those dwarves regret that they ever showed up today."

We all came together, hugging each other in one massive group. I cared for each of the women in my arms, even after knowing them for such a short period of time.

This was my new family, and I'd be damned if I let some bearded dwarf ladies stop us from landing the biggest contract in the history of this business.

It was time to put our game faces on.

Within minutes, we were told by the elf girl at the front desk that the meeting was about to begin. We were led into a small board room that looked almost like a courtroom by appearance. On the one side were two tables right next to each other, each with room for five seats. On the opposite side, there was one long table with room for three seats, and I

noticed the chairs were much smaller than ours, and that this table was more elevated in height.

We got there before the dwarves, and I selected the table on the right side of the room, sitting down in the middle seat while Paulina and Kennedi sat to my left and Sadie sat to my right.

Behind us, I could hear the dwarves filing in. They moved right behind us and I could see Enid kick her foot into Paulina's chair.

"Losers!" she coughed as she walked by, being a total jerk before taking her seat.

Like the good leader she was, Paulina didn't engage. She turned her attention back to us. "Remember, we're here to prove we're the better business, and we deserve this contract. Don't let them get under your skin."

With her guidance, I could tell no one was going to do anything stupid. Even Kennedi looked oddly calm as we waited for the three board members to arrive.

Waiting for them felt like a small eternity, but about five minutes after we sat down, the door finally opened and they started to file in one by one.

"Here we go," whispered Sadie right next to me. "Let's hope they like us."

I had an idea of what we might be facing when it came to the board. The board of directors that we were meeting with handled all business that pertained to the Beauman Hotel, and seeing as fairies made up most of the ruling class and the clientele, I expected to see fairies coming in, and that's exactly what I got.

"Good morning, good morning!" chimed the first fairy, an older woman with a chubby yet kind face and thick grandma glasses on her face. "Thank you all for coming!"

She moved to the empty table, where she sat in the spot directly facing us. She was just as tiny as I expected, and she maneuvered her chair so that she wasn't sitting at the desk as much as she was sitting on top of it.

"My name is Augusta Whitmore, but my friends all call me Auggie," she said, introducing herself. "It's so lovely to meet both groups! I have to say

that your applications were very promising indeed."

With those words, Auggie produced a piece of paper and started to read it. She then looked over at us. "You must be Paulina of Goblin Girl Maid Service, correct?"

"That's right, Mrs. Whitmore," said Paulina.

"Please, dear, just call me Auggie," said the kind older fairy, giving her a smile.

I had a good feeling about Auggie, even as she repeated the gesture with Esther and the dwarves. I didn't get the impression that she would be biased in any way, and she seemed naturally warm and kind to both parties, something that I figured would play well once the dwarves' sour attitude was put on display.

"I thought this was a meeting of the board," said Esther suddenly, after introductions. "Where are the other members?"

I grinned as I saw the dismayed look on Auggie's face. With just a little luck, the dwarves would tank this meeting without any help from us.

"They should be here any second," said Auggie. "Ah, I see Minerva coming now."

The fairy known as Minerva entered the room like a queen about to assume her throne. She didn't have that warm quality to her like Auggie did, but she seemed polite enough once she sat down at the middle of the table. It wasn't hard to tell that she was the one that would be making the ultimate decision, especially as she introduced herself.

"My name is Minerva Hoffman, but you may call me Ms. Hoffman," she said, ditching the informality. "My family owns the Beauman Hotel, and I currently serve as the chairman of the board."

I think we all sat up a little straighter after hearing that. I was still feeling good though, and as long as this last person wasn't a complete bust, we still had a good chance of winning this entire thing.

That last person didn't keep us waiting for long. I heard someone shut the door, and I waited for them to come around my side before setting eyes on them.

I just wish I didn’t know that person already. Both Paulina and I sucked in our breath when we saw those familiar eyes looking back at us.

“Well, isn’t this a real treat?” asked Mrs. Pennington, planting her hands on her tiny hips.

Chapter Nineteen

Of all the fairies in Dragonmont City, how could we be so unlucky to get Mrs. Pennington?

She was the last person I wanted to see, and memories of our last encounter with her filled my thoughts as she took her seat.

I glanced over at Paulina only to see that she looked more worried about Mrs. Pennington than she did about Esther and her band of troublemakers.

“This is bad,” she whispered to me. “Really bad.”

“Maybe not,” I replied. “I know we didn’t leave that situation on the best terms, but maybe Mrs. Pennington regrets what happened? Maybe she’ll give us an honest shot?”

I was quickly robbed of that notion as I looked at Mrs. Pennington at that moment.

The woman was *glaring* at me like I kicked her puppy or something.

“Or maybe not,” I whispered to Paulina, making her cover her face with her hands.

At that moment, I remembered exactly the way we left things. It had felt so good to call her a raging bitch on the way out of her penthouse, but now all I could think about was how those words were going to come back to haunt me.

We were screwed.

“Very well, let’s call this meeting to order,” said Ms. Hoffman, using her hand against the table like a gavel. “The reason we’re all here today concerns the selection of a new company for maid service for the Beauman Hotel. The owner of the last company has decided to retire, and we would need a replacement to start within the next few days.”

Ms. Hoffman’s cool professionalism was then replaced by the kindhearted Auggie.

“We just couldn’t make a decision when it came to your two companies,” gushed the older fairy. “Both of you looked like you would be lovely fits,

and since you both meet all the qualifications we were looking for, we decided we had to meet you in person!”

“Though it seems one company is more qualified than the other,” added Mrs. Pennington tartly while she stared daggers at me. She then turned to face the other fairies. “I’m not sure why this is necessary. The dwarves have more maids and they come highly recommended already. Why not just pick them and get this over with?”

So that’s how it was going to be. Mrs. Pennington wasn’t just still angry with us, she was going to be vindictive too.

“That is an excellent notion,” said Esther. “We’d love to accept and wrap this meeting up right now.”

“Hold your dragons,” said Ms. Hoffman. “The purpose of this meeting is because we couldn’t select a winner that easily. In the interest of fairness, we wanted to bring both companies in so we could meet you personally. We have a few things we want to ask, and more than anything, we’d like to see your view on why you’d be the best fit for the Beauman Hotel.”

“This isn’t a charity though,” said Mrs. Pennington suddenly. “We will pick the best company—the one with a sterling reputation and an obvious track record for success. And who has had more success in the cleaning business than dwarves?”

I was starting to think we were screwed, but then Ms. Hoffman said something that gave me a ray of hope.

“Any decision made by this board must be unanimous by all members,” she said. “We want our winner to stand out head and shoulders above their competition.”

“That will definitely help us,” whispered Paulina right next to me. “The other two can help to nullify Mrs. Pennington’s influence.”

“Maybe,” I replied. “But Mrs. Pennington could be the bad egg that spoils the batch. And she looks very determined to make sure that we don’t win this.”

Paulina leaned in closer. “So what do we do? How do we play this?”

“Nothing changes from our game plan before,” I said. “Let’s show them why we’re the best.”

At that time, each company was called in for a more thorough session with the board. We went first, and Esther and her dwarves left the room. We had the floor for nearly forty minutes while we answered questions from the board and gave the sales pitch of our lives.

Paulina led our efforts, and I couldn’t have been more proud of her. It was entirely obvious that she had a lot of pride in the business, plenty of experience, and she was knowledgeable as well as pleasant. I could tell that we made a favorable impression on Auggie, who looked like she was becoming our own personal cheerleader by the end of our session.

Ms. Hoffman was tougher to read, and she did a much better job at keeping her neutrality. I could tell she liked us, but I just couldn’t decide whether or not she was in our camp.

The worst of it was dealing with Mrs. Pennington. Every time she opened her mouth, it was some kind of snide remark or a loaded question that wasn’t so easy to answer.

“The biggest question I want to know is has your business ever been fired from a job?” asked Mrs. Pennington, smirking at us while Paulina tried to deftly navigate the question.

“We’re not always a fit for every customer,” said Paulina before changing the subject. “But I believe that regarding the needs of the Beauman Hotel, we would be an excellent fit.”

“I’d like you to answer the question please,” insisted Mrs. Pennington. “When was the last time you were fired from the job?”

Ms. Hoffman stared at Mrs. Pennington. “Really, Beatrice? What is with you today?”

“It’s a simple question, Minerva. I want to make sure we hire the best, and if they’ve been fired before, I think that says a lot about where they’re coming from, don’t you?”

“If you must know, we had our contract terminated just this last week,” said Paulina defiantly.

Ms. Hoffman frowned. “Who was your employer?”

Paulina pointed to Mrs. Pennington. “Her.”

You could have heard a pin drop in that room. Both Auggie and Ms. Hoffman rebounded on Mrs. Pennington, who was still wearing that smirk of hers.

“It’s true,” confirmed the stuffy fairy. “I fired them. So why would I hire them for the Beauman?”

“There were extenuating circumstances,” I said. “And I’d like to mention that none of it was due to performance issues.”

“You were still fired,” said Mrs. Pennington flatly.

I thought the writing might be on the wall for us, but I was surprised just how much it backfired on Mrs. Pennington. Auggie was openly glaring at her, and even Ms. Hoffman seemed displeased by the way that she seemed out to get us. More than anything, they even seemed like they were on our side now, determined that we would get a fair showing.

“We need to be objective, Beatrice,” hissed Ms. Hoffman. “This is my family’s hotel. I won’t let trivialities get in the way of us hiring the best company!”

That comment seemed to hit right on target, and Mrs. Pennington was better behaved during the rest of our session. She still wasn’t pleasant, but her questions weren’t so biting anymore.

After our turn was over we switched places with the dwarves. I was cautiously optimistic about the result.

“How do you think we did?” asked Sadie, as we sat in the waiting room.

“It could go either way,” said Paulina. “At least I feel like Mrs. Pennington played her hand too early. The other two are wise to the fact that she doesn’t like us.”

“I’d love to be a fly on the wall in that room right now,” said Kennedi. “She’s probably so far up their asses that she can mine their shit.”

“I think we had a great showing though,” I said, putting my arm around Paulina. “You did incredible. We’ve only made it this far because of you.”

Despite her nerves, Paulina gave me a beaming smile. “You really think that?”

“I really do.”

She put her head on my shoulder and sighed happily.

“I just hope one of those dwarf bitches screws up majorly in their meeting,” said Kennedi. “Especially Enid. I hate her the most.”

Sadie started to laugh. “Why her in particular?”

“It’s simple really. She’s the ugliest.”

I was surprised when Sadie nodded her head in agreement. In my eyes, they were all just as ugly as the next. If this weren’t a maid contest but a beauty competition, the result would have been foregone before we even stepped foot in the room.

We waited until we were called back in the room about a half hour later, resuming our spots at the table. With both groups having their personal interviews, I suspected we would get their verdict now on which one would be the winner.

The only problem I saw was the fact that it had to be a unanimous decision. And I still didn’t like the way that Mrs. Pennington was glaring at us.

“Thank you both for coming in this morning,” started Ms. Hoffman. “It’s very obvious to us that both companies are uniquely qualified to handle the job in front of you. I think that both of you would do a tremendous job, and therein lies the problem. We were unable to reach a unanimous vote on which company to move forward with.”

I felt my shoulders slump forward as soon as I heard that, and I wasn’t the only one. Paulina did the same, and on the other side of the room, I could tell the dwarves were speechless that this was so close.

“In light of it being such a hard decision, we’re going to implement one final ask of you,” said Auggie. “A good old-fashioned clean-off!”

Upon hearing this, the dwarves got excited very quickly, which I took to be a bad sign. When I looked at Paulina though, she didn’t appear crushed by the news.

“What’s a clean-off?” I asked her.

“A cleaning competition between both sides,” she explained. “The side with the tidiest penthouse gets the job in the end.”

That seemed like an interesting way to solve the deadlock.

“Looking at our schedules, we’ll be able to do this clean-off the day after tomorrow,” said Ms. Hoffman. “Specifically at nine o’clock in the morning. I trust there isn’t any conflict with either company about making this?”

“We can make that work,” replied Esther after a quick huddle with her team.

Paulina looked at all of us, but mostly Sadie since she was still the unknown factor in the group. After Sadie flashed a thumbs-up, Paulina spoke up too.

“Us too. That works just fine.”

“Wonderful,” said Ms. Hoffman. “Thank you both for coming in today. We’ll meet here at the lobby the day after tomorrow, at which case we’ll lead you to the penthouses to be cleaned. I wish both companies good luck!”

With that last message, the meeting was over. I could see the tension go out of everyone at our table with the news that we were still in the fight. I just wished we had our answer a little sooner.

There was a hasty rush for the exit. Esther, Enid, and the other dwarves scoffed as they passed us, and they were abruptly followed by the other board members.

All except Mrs. Pennington, who wasn’t done just yet.

“Very cute display you’ve done today,” she said, addressing both me and Paulina. “Too bad none of it will matter in the long run.”

“That still hasn’t been decided yet,” said Paulina coolly. “And if you were going to get your way, you would have gotten it already.”

“Maybe, or maybe not,” snapped Mrs. Pennington. “But I will make sure that my esteemed colleagues see the benefit of going with the dwarves.

Especially after what you did to me."

"What we did to you?" I asked, crossing my arms in front of my chest. "You couldn't make it as my guardian for more than five minutes before you screwed it up. And you fired Paulina, who is the most honest, not to mention most competent, maid in the whole city. We did nothing to you!"

Mrs. Pennington growled and pointed her finger in my face. "My uncle found out about what happened and blamed me! Losing your guardianship lost me a nice, little tax write-off! I'm not going to let that go unpunished!"

"We're people too, you know," I replied. "Not everything is about money."

"Think what you like," she said, taking a scarf and throwing it around her neck dramatically. "I'm going to do everything possible to make sure your company doesn't get this job. Toodles!"

With those last words, the diva-like fairy stormed out of the room, leaving us speechless.

Chapter Twenty

"Maybe we could kill her? Just a little bit?"

We were all a little disparaged by Mrs. Pennington's comments as we left, but it wasn't until we arrived back at the duplex that the more outlandish solutions started to come out.

"How do you kill someone just a *little* bit?" Sadie asked Kennedi once we sat down in the living room.

"I don't know, but I think it would help solve our problem!" said Kennedi brightly.

"And cause a whole host of new ones," I added, chuckling.

"I was only joking," she said. "Mostly."

"She really doesn't like Kevin and Paulina," noted Sadie. "You would think y'all killed her firstborn by what you did. This is all about denying her a tax write-off? Seriously?"

"Mrs. Pennington was not an easy person to work for," replied Paulina. "I just never figured she'd be in this position. I knew she was connected, but this is almost absurdly ironic."

"We could arrange for a one-way dragon trip," said Kennedi. "One that never returns! Or doesn't return for a long time. Maybe somewhere tropical."

"I'm just trying to get her to change her opinion, not send her on vacation," grumbled Paulina.

"Maybe we could arrange for her to get laid," said Sadie, giggling. "It sounds like she needs it."

"Most fairies are asexual," said Paulina. "But it's a good suggestion nevertheless."

Kennedi looked hurt by that comment. "Weren't my suggestions good too?"

“Totally,” said Paulina, soothing her by patting her hand. She made eye contact with me and mouthed the word, “No.”

I laughed but we were still in a pickle. There was also the matter of making sure we won the clean-off too.

“Have you ever done a clean-off before?” I asked Paulina.

“Twice,” she confirmed. “It is fairly standard. They are simple but very strict. You have to bring your A-game if you’re going to compete.”

“A-game as in you can’t leave a single crumb behind?”

“Higher than that,” said Kennedi. “You have to dust and do everything. They come behind you with a white glove to check. It’s not for the faint of heart.”

“It’s a good thing when you’re going against a new company,” said Paulina. “Or someone that’s not as experienced.”

Sadie looked nervous all of a sudden. “Someone like me?”

“Oh, crap,” replied Paulina. “Sorry, Sadie, I wasn’t trying to scare you.”

“I’m not shakin’ in my boots or anything, but y’all definitely have me a little nervous now,” said Sadie. “What if I’m not good enough?”

“You will be,” said Paulina. “I’ll take you under my wing. I’ll show you how to be the best maid anywhere. If we lose the clean-off, it won’t be because of you.”

That seemed to soothe Sadie a little, but I couldn’t help but think we are competing in a rigged contest. What good was it if we didn’t leave so much as a speck of dirt behind if Mrs. Pennington was determined to sabotage us?

I wondered what I could do to change the situation. There was so much vitriol from Mrs. Pennington that I didn’t think it worthwhile to start there.

But what about the dwarves?

“I have a crazy idea,” I said. “Do you think I could talk the dwarf ladies into dropping out?”

All three goblin girls stared at me, and not in a good way. I didn't think it was such a strange suggestion, but Kennedi spoke up before I could retract it.

"You're right, Kevin," she said. "That is a crazy idea."

"They'll never go for it," added Paulina, shaking her head. "There's an intense rivalry there, and it's sprinkled with mutual dislike on both sides. They won't miss a chance to beat us."

"I don't think you're wrong at all," I said. "But that rivalry is with you and Kennedi. That's where the shared history is. Not so much with me though."

"Are you thinking that they'd be more inclined to work with you because they don't know you?" asked Sadie.

I snapped my fingers. "Exactly. I'm a blank slate. I can come at them from neutral ground."

"They also thought you were a snack," added Kennedi. "I saw the way Esther looked at you. She wanted to gobble you right up."

"Okay, first of all, gross," I said, chuckling. "But second of all, that might work to my advantage. Let me go see them. We'll never know if we don't ask, right?"

All eyes fell on Paulina as she chewed her bottom lip. Seconds passed by until . . .

"Oh, what the hell," she said. "We need all the help we can get. I hope you can talk some sense into them."

"We'd also take some beating the sense into them too," said Kennedi.

"Wish me luck" I said, hopping off the couch.

I just had to convince a group of competitive dwarf maids to drop out of one of the most lucrative contracts in the city.

Should be a piece of cake.

As it turned out, finding the dwarf ladies wasn't the hard part. I was able to find their profile on the forum pretty easily and the link to their website after that. They were large enough that they could afford actual office space downtown, in a building that wasn't far away from the hotel.

It was close to late morning by the time I left, making my way down the nearly-empty streets of the city. Along the way, I tried to rehearse a basic pitch that I could give to them, but nothing I came up with sounded very good in my head.

As I got close, I decided just to wing it. In the heat of the moment, I had confidence I could find the right words to communicate what I needed to say.

When I arrived at their office, I could see their logo plastered to the door in front of me. It wasn't warm and inviting like ours, but a rather in-your-face style logo with big lettering that was meant to intimidate. I didn't expect anything different from dwarves so I opened the door and looked around.

The place was strangely cold. Not in a temperature kind of way but in that the decoration was entirely lacking in warmth. Someone had worked hard to make a natural setting, with wallpaper that looked like rocks and harsh yellow lighting overhead.

Frankly, I felt like I just stepped into Moria.

I could hear something around the corner, something that sounded like a drill instructor barking orders. Finding the sound out of place, I followed it until I came into what was essentially a boot camp for new dwarf maids.

"Clean that toilet, recruit!" yelled a hairy dwarf maid at a crop of new girls clustered around a mock toilet. I winced at the yelling, but it was clear that it had only just begun.

The drill instructor whipped around to another new maid on the other side of the room, who had just finished making a bed. The instructor shook her head and screamed at her.

"You call that making a bed? There's no crease in those sheets! What the hell good is it to have a bed sheet without a proper crease! You're a disgrace!"

Seconds later, the instructor moved toward another group that was trying to get a stain out of the carpet. “No, no, no! Is this group full of dumbasses or something? You need to dab it, not wipe it!”

One of the bearded recruits started to cry, running away from the scene as fast as her legs could carry her.

It was like cleaning boot camp from hell. I was horrified by what I saw. New army recruits were treated better than this back on Earth, and I couldn’t help but feel sorry for the girls.

No wonder the dwarf ladies were arrogant and mean. They had all the kindness beaten out of them in boot camp.

I was beginning to think this was a bad idea, but before I could leave, I heard a familiar voice behind me.

“Well, well, well. Come to switch sides?”

My Balrog had appeared in the form of Esther.

I was frozen to my spot as she moved beside me, gesturing toward the scene that was unfolding in boot camp. “Impressive, isn’t it? Most of these girls have never picked up a broom in their lives. And soon they will be top-level maids working for the best maid service in the city.”

I didn’t want to start off on the wrong foot by saying something negative. As disgusted as I was, I couldn’t start off with an insult if I wanted them to drop out.

“It’s . . . something alright,” I said.

Esther grinned. “It’s the kind of training I had. My grandmother taught me everything I know about maid service, and she could give that instructor a run for her money. I remember days of coming home with bloody fingers, but it made me who I am today.”

That sounded just plain awful. I said nothing while Esther turned to face me.

“And now you’re here looking for work, I presume?” she asked. “I don’t blame you. I’m guessing you’ve been recently reborn here and they’re the first group that gave you the time of day? Either way, I really could use a business manager on my side if you think you’re up to the task. Someone

to not only manage all the girls but to manage all the different contracts we hold. Interested?”

I raised my eyebrow. “You know absolutely nothing about me and you’re trying to offer me a job?”

Esther sneered. “I know that you’re incredibly valuable to Paulina. And that makes you fair game in my opinion. I don’t care if you’re as useless as a dual-headed mop, if I can deny my enemy another resource, I win.”

“The world is a very black and white place to you, isn’t it?”

Her gaze narrowed. “What do you mean?”

“I mean the first thing you assume when I show up here is that I want to switch sides,” I said. “You can’t even fathom the idea that maybe I came here to talk, not to ditch my friends.”

“You’re doing lots of talking right now,” snapped Esther. “And you still need to do more of it?”

“I really do,” I said, trying to pick my words wisely. It would do me no good to start antagonizing her. “Can I make you an offer?

I still needed her to hear me out.

Esther regarded me coldly for a minute. “What do you want?”

“I was hoping we could work something out,” I said. “About this Beauman contract.”

She laughed so hard she snorted. “The only thing I’m willing to consider is your immediate withdrawal from the contract. You might as well give it a lot of thought. You’re just going to be embarrassed in two days when we win and you lose. Paulina should know better than to go head-to-head with a *real* maid service. She should go back to her single-family homes and leave these jobs to the professionals.”

“We are a real maid service,” I said firmly. “And Paulina is excellent at what she does, but that’s not the point I’m trying to make. This contract is a rebirth moment for our company. It’s something we really need to ensure our survival. I need to do everything possible to make sure we get this contract. That’s why I want to propose a deal.”

“What kind of deal?” she asked suspiciously.

“I want to offer my help,” I said. “At finding a new contract for your maid service? We’ll take the Beauman this time around, but to compensate you for your loss, I’ll help you find a new contract that will more than make up for your time—”

“Wait a second,” interrupted Esther, now trying her damnedest not to laugh. “You want *us* to drop out?”

“Well, yeah. But I’ll help to find you a new contract.”

She laughed so hard she snorted. “Are you freaking joking? You have a lot of balls to come in here and think you can make that kind of offer to me!”

“I’m trying to do the best for Paulina,” I said. “The best for our company.”

“The best thing for Paulina would be for her to start a new business in another industry!” snapped Esther. “You think you’re going to get us to drop out? I’d sooner give a rim job to an ogre than do that!”

That provided quite the disgusting imagery in my head, and I had to shake that thought away quickly.

“I’m sure there’s something we can work out,” I said. “Won’t you please reconsider? This city is more than big enough for the both of us to live peacefully.”

She pointed her fat finger at me. “That’s where you’re wrong! My business is expanding, and very soon I will own all the lucrative contracts in Dragonmont City. There will be no room for any competitors here, thank you very much.”

I didn’t know what else to say. Esther’s vitriol was so toxic that I doubted I could offer her anything that would make her drop out.

She was vindictive enough that she would still do it just as a means to screw over Paulina.

And that made me incredibly angry.

“You’re not going to win,” I said, seething inside. “We’re going to beat you at this clean-off fair and square. And when we take this contract, we’re going to prove that you’re only the second-best maid service in the city.”

Esther stroked her long beard as she laughed. “Yeah, okay! You keep dreaming now, alright? And when we beat you, try not to let Paulina cry! I so *hate* to watch it when the competition cries when they lose!”

She clenched her hands into fists and brought them to her eyes, mimicking a crying motion. I’d seen enough at this point. I shook my head with disgust and marched right out of that office.

“Goblin girls don’t belong in the maid service business!” she yelled as I walked out. “And I’m going to prove it to you!”

I let the door slam behind me, not caring what anyone thought. I didn’t walk home as much as I stormed there, my heavy footsteps smacking against the pavement.

I couldn’t have been more disgusted. Not only was Esther the ugliest thing I’d ever seen in my life, she had a heart that matched her exterior.

She’d tried to do everything possible to demoralize us to make her chances of victory even higher than they already were. And yet, despite all that happened, I was more committed to our cause than ever.

Karma had to find a way to win here. It just had to.

When I arrived home, I found Paulina still training Sadie. They were in Paulina’s bedroom, and Paulina was showing her the proper way to make a bed. At first glance, I could tell that if Sadie had been at that boot camp, she would have been one of the ones crying while she was verbally abused.

“Well?” asked Paulina, looking at me hopefully. “How did it go?”

“As expected,” I grumbled. “We need to get training. No matter what happens, we’re going to need to bring our A-game against those fucking dwarves.”

Chapter Twenty-One

IT WAS A LONG AFTERNOON.

I spent the rest of the day helping Paulina and Kennedi with Sadie's training. At first, I questioned just how much help I could be, since I wasn't trained in maid service and it wasn't like I could teach Sadie anything.

"That might be true, but we need your help making things dirty," said Paulina.

"Yeah, make the place a little messy!" said Kennedi. "Throw your clothes on the floor, leave your dishes in your bedroom. Mess up your sheets a little. Actually, I can help you with that last one if you prefer?"

The offer was very tempting, but so was the idea of getting Sadie ready for this clean-off. By the end of the day, all of us were exhausted. We invited Sadie to stay over, putting her in the spare bedroom so that we could resume her training first thing in the morning. After a nice relaxing soak in the hot tub, Paulina actually made Sadie put her maid outfit back on for more training just before bed.

I felt for Sadie, and I wondered if she knew what she'd gotten herself into. To her credit though, she didn't complain once. Her offer to help was incredibly genuine, and she knew just how much was at stake with this job.

I really had to admire her dedication.

It was late by the time that Paulina decided to call it a night. I was in the living room, watching more goblin television when I saw Sadie enter the room out of the corner of my eye.

She looked exhausted, but she still had a smile on her face as she moved to the couch and flopped down right next to me. Sadie blew a strand of hair out of her face and took a deep breath.

"Maid service is tougher than I imagined it would be," she said, making us both laugh with the simple poignancy of her words.

"You're a real trooper for getting through this day," I said. "I know it must have been tough."

“Did you know there are over ten different ways to make a bed? I had no clue there were so many! I just assumed you pulled your covers up to your pillow and called it a day!”

I started to laugh. “Did you learn how to put the crease in? Apparently, that’s really important.”

“Oh, believe me, I heard *all* about it,” she stressed. “Paulina runs a tough boot camp.”

“Trust me, it could be a lot worse. A lot worse.”

She shrugged. “It’s okay. It’s not like I hate the work or anything.”

“Bet you’re already wishing you could get another job, right? Or that you could go back to computer science?”

Her answer surprised me.

Sadie shrugged. “In a really weird way, no. Isn’t that crazy? It’s kinda . . . fulfilling in a way.”

“Really? I’m surprised to hear that.”

Sadie giggled. “Maybe I’m going crazy. That’s always a possibility. It’s just that I can see the results of my work in this job. When I leave a room, it’s clean. I can see everything I did. It wasn’t like that at the hot tub store. And sure, I could make a website, but it’s just pounding away at a keyboard for a while. It’s just not as rewarding as it is doing something with your own hands.”

“I can understand that,” I said. “A lot of people say that about office jobs. Working with your hands is more fulfilling in the long run.”

She pointed at me. “Yes! That’s what I’m getting at. It’s just the physical aspect of it, I guess. I’m dead tired, but I feel happy because all that work went into something that I can see.” Sadie let out a content sigh. “I’m going nuts, aren’t I?”

I laughed. “Nah, I think you’re just fine. Maybe a little delusional, but in a good way.”

“Delusional but in a good way,” she repeated. “That’s the book title of my life.”

“It could be worse. You could be a bearded dwarf lady right now.”

“This is true. What would be the title of their lives then?”

“Angry and Hairy: The Real Dwarves of Dragonmont City.”

Sadie laughed so hard that she started to wave her hand. “Stop or you’re gonna make me pee!”

These were the moments that I enjoyed the most. When you could forget about everything that was going on and just focus on having fun. Sadie knew how to do that better than most. I knew she could be all business when the situation called for it, but when she let her hair down, it was a real treat.

Especially when she started looking at me like she was doing right now.

“Can I tell you something?” she said as all the humor went out of her voice. “Promise you won’t laugh at me?”

“Of course. What’s on your mind?”

Sadie used her finger to trace the veins on the back of my hand. “I haven’t . . . umm, I haven’t dated in a long time.”

Wow, so that’s where this was going. I didn’t know what to say to that, and Sadie interpreted my silence poorly.

“I shouldn’t have said anything,” she said, shaking her head. “Sorry.”

“No, no,” I said quickly. I grabbed her hand and squeezed it. “I’m not judging you or anything. I just didn’t know what to say. I find that really hard to believe.”

“Why’s that?”

“You’re just so pretty that I don’t know how you don’t have a line out your door every day when you wake up.”

The radiance that showed on her face was completely endearing. So too was the way that she tucked a strand of her red hair behind her ear.

“I really like you,” she said. “And I’m not blind either. I know that both Kennedi and Paulina feel the same. That’s why I felt like it was important that I told them how I was feeling.”

I swallowed hard. “You told them that you like me?”

She nodded. “I did.”

“And how did they respond?”

Sadie grinned. “Let’s just say they welcomed me with open arms.”

Someone pinch me. This new life was just too good to be true. As soon as she said the words, I could feel my cock starting to respond. Suddenly, the idea of stripping Sadie from her maid outfit was not just a dream but a potential reality.

She turned and gave me the full weight of her gaze. Those deep pools of blue centered on me as a wave of anxiety hit her.

“Do you . . . do you like me too?” she asked.

I was nodding before she even finished. Not because I had sex on the brain, but because it was the genuine truth.

Okay, maybe I was thinking about sex a little bit, but I really liked Sadie. And I definitely thought her addition into our group would be incredible.

“Is it okay if I try something?” she asked as her lips parted into a devastatingly sexy smile.

“Of course.”

Sadie suddenly launched herself into my lap. Her lips sought mine and they connected in an explosion of fireworks. She straddled me, her legs landing on either side of my thighs as that thin material of her maid skirt rode up high. When I grabbed her butt, I could feel the hem just right there, ready for me to strip it off of her.

That seemed to be exactly what she wanted. It was like flipping a switch with her. One minute she was cool, calm, and collected, and in the next, I had a verifiable sex goddess in my lap.

Not that I was complaining. I was just happy that it was Sadie, and I wanted to kiss her again after the first time it happened. The tension between us had been driving me crazy.

“I had to do that,” she said, when our kiss finally broke. “The tension between us was just making me crazy.”

I chuckled. “Were you just reading my mind or something?”

“Were you thinking the same thing?”

“Totally. You were right on target.”

Sadie grinned and slid off my lap. “We can keep playing that game. Want to guess what I’m thinking about now?”

She reached over, grabbing her duster that had been sitting on the other side of the couch. With a coy smirk, she brushed it lightly over my nose and down my chest.

“Oh, I can take a few guesses,” I said, watching as it inched closer to my cock.

“How did you get so *dirty*?” she said huskily. “It looks like I’m going to have to put my new skills to the test.”

I bit my lip as I watched her slide over my stomach, not stopping until the tip of the duster brushed against my cock. I was throbbing inside my shorts, and more than anything, I needed to get these clothes off.

Sadie focused her sexy eyes on me. “May I?”

“May you what?”

She tapped my cock with her duster. “You’re overdressed. Very much so.”

“Please do.”

She slipped off the couch and maneuvered between my legs. Taking hold of my shorts, she started to yank them down, not stopping until they were bunched around my ankles. My briefs went with them, freeing my cock for the first time that night.

The effect on Sadie was nothing short of electrifying. It was like her body seized up once she saw me, throbbing hard and standing proud for her. She opened her hand, and I watched as it came closer as if in slow motion.

When our skin collided, we both groaned. Me from the exquisite feel and warmth, and Sadie from the sheer eroticism of it all.

“Sweet heavens to Betsy,” muttered Sadie with her charming Southern accent. “Now *that’s* a cock.”

She gave it a tentative stroke while I sucked in air. “Do you like it?”

“Like it? I fucking love it,” she said, continuing to stroke me. “It’s so big. I’ve always heard that humans were big but not like this.”

Her fascination with it might have been comical if I wasn’t so turned on. I was raging hard, and we hadn’t even done anything yet.

But where was tonight going to go? How far did Sadie want to go before we stopped?

I got my answer with what she did next.

Before I knew it, her duster was back in her hand. She started at my stomach, brushing down lower and lower until she reached the sensitive tip. It was almost like a ticklish feeling, but not one that made me want to squirm away.

It was weirdly erotic, and I loved every second of it. Especially as she did it while stroking me.

“I need to clean you, dirty boy,” she said, in what might have been the sexiest thing I’d ever witnessed. Having a goblin girl as sexy as Sadie wearing her full maid uniform while she dusted my cock was certainly taking me to new highs.

I was afraid that all this special treatment was going to end, but once Sadie was certain I was “clean” she set the duster on the ground. I watched as her head moved closer and closer until . . .

“Fuck yes,” I groaned when I felt her lips slide down the shaft. “You look so sexy.”

My encouragement only spurred her forward. I was mesmerized as she took more and more of my cock, sliding down until her lips hit the base of my pubic bone. She pulled back up, taking a deep breath in amazement at her new accomplishment.

“I don’t think I’m going to be able to get enough of you,” she said before dribbling saliva on the tip.

“Believe me, I think I can handle that.”

She smiled until she brought the tip back to her lips. I watched as she moved that lip slowly over the head, popping me into her mouth as she maintained eye contact. I could feel the tongue bathing the underside of the shaft, which only added to the feeling.

It was like Sadie knew just the right amount of pressure to use. I was amazed at how quickly she took me from zero to one hundred, to the point where I felt I was about to cum. When I got there, she backed off, teasing me in such a way that she was continually keeping me on edge.

She knew exactly what she was doing. That impish look in her eye every time she released my cock told me she didn't want me to cum until she was good and ready.

It was agony, but it was the kind of agony I'd willingly sign up for. She must have sucked me for nearly twenty minutes, nearly making me cum three times. Just when I felt like she wasn't going to let it happen, Sadie grinned at me and gave me everything she had.

Within about ten seconds, I passed the point of no return.

"Sadie," I warned. "I'm gonna cum."

Her mouth was working overtime. That tongue was massaging my shaft, and she kept the pressure just right. When I came, I absolutely flooded her mouth. My orgasm was so intense that I could see black spots in my vision.

All the while, she just kept sucking. She didn't stop until she received every drop, swallowing it down with a grin that made my heart beat still.

"That was the sexiest thing I ever saw in my life," I said finally, my voice completely ragged.

There was still lust in her eyes, like she hadn't been anywhere close to being sated. I knew that feeling well by now, knowing that one orgasm with a goblin girl was never enough. My cock was still hard, and I knew exactly what I needed next.

Sadie straightened her body as she kept one hand glued to my cock. Her hair was disheveled, with a few loose strands across her face that made her look sexier than usual.

“How do you want me?” she whispered.

“Up here,” I said, patting my lap. “Get up here, gorgeous.”

She smiled at me as she stood all the way up. Sadie then promptly turned around to face the other direction. She bent at the hips all the way to her toes, yanking her panties down those long, toned legs until they hit the ground.

For the briefest of moments, I caught sight of her heart-shaped ass under that maid outfit and my cock pulsed. When she turned around again, Sadie lifted one leg until it landed on the couch, followed by her other.

Suddenly, her entire body was on top of me. I could feel the heat between her legs on me, and more than anything I just wanted to slide inside and make her mine.

When I looked up, I could see that she was grinning at me.

“What are you smiling about?”

Sadie placed both hands against my chest and slid them south. “I’m just so happy this is about to happen. I thought about this that day we met.”

“You did? Really?”

She giggled. “Probably didn’t expect that, did you? But I thought about it when you were standing at the register, without even enough money to afford chlorine.”

“Dark days for me truly,” I joked.

“I think it worked out alright.”

“I think you’re right.”

Sadie lifted up on her feet, raising her ass into the air. She reached behind us, taking my slick cock into her hand and positioning me right where I needed to be.

When she sank down, I could feel the tip slide inside her wet tunnel. The intense heat against my shaft made me groan almost from the start.

“Oh, yes!” she whispered. “Right . . . *there*.”

She kept lowering, letting me fill her. Her pussy stretched out around my cock, molding to its shape as she took in as much as she could. It was nothing short of heavenly, and when I finally bottomed out inside her, I knew this was meant to happen.

Sadie shuddered on top of me. I raised my hands to her hips, letting them glide over the thin fabric of her outfit. It was a secret thrill that she was still dressed like a maid, letting me indulge in the fantasy. Every once in a while though, I would lift her skirt so that I could watch my cock sliding in and out of her.

It didn't get any better than that. Or so I thought.

"Look at my tits, Kevin," she moaned, bouncing in my lap as her hands went to her chest. She pulled them out of her outfit, letting them rest over the top. Her nipples were still soft, but under her fingers she managed to coax them to full hardness.

I leaned up, wrapping my lips around her nipple and suckling until her moans got even louder.

"Oh, fuck. Holy shit. Just like *that*! Oh my gosh!"

Sadie's fingers ran through my hair, keeping me tight against her breasts as she continued to ride in a back-and-forth motion that was hitting all the right spots for both of us. I could already feel the desire to cum again, and it wasn't long until Sadie's first orgasm hit her like a ton of bricks.

What made her so unique when she came was that Sadie went completely silent. She had been very vocal with her encouragement and moans up until that point, but when she went crashing over the edge, she became deadly silent as her body was wracked with her orgasm.

It was both sexy and adorable at the same time. I could feel her juices coating my shaft and slipping down my balls, creating a puddle on the couch. That was the last thing I cared about though. I only wanted Sadie to keep cumming for me.

Which she did. Over three more times in the next ten minutes. By the time the second one came, she'd lost almost all energy in her body, so we repositioned so that her head was resting on the armrest of the couch. I

slipped between her legs and reentered her, pounding away at that welcoming green pussy.

By that point, I could hold my orgasm for no longer. My pace reached a breakneck speed as I watched her flush a deep green color. I totally lost control when it hit, planting my entire length inside her and unloading what felt like a gallon of cum into her body.

“Fill me!” she urged. “Fill my body! *Yes*! Yes, oh gosh, yes!”

Listening to Sadie with her sweet accent beg me to cum inside her was definitely a highlight of my life. When I fell on top of her moments later, we were both exhausted, sweaty, and in desperate need of a shower.

Not to mention, I think I ripped her maid outfit just a little bit.

Sadie noticed right away. She put her fingers through a small tear by the hip.

“You think Paulina will give me a new one?” she asked, giggling to herself.

“Oh, yeah. I’m sure this has happened before.”

“Really? To Paulina?”

“Well, probably more likely to Kennedi.”

“Yeah, that seems a lot more accurate.”

Chapter Twenty-Two

I SPENT that night in bed with Sadie. After we took a shower together (in which we succeeded in cumming together one more time apiece), I invited her to sleep in my bed.

We didn't do much sleeping, in what was becoming a very usual routine for me. Part of me wondered if I'd ever sleep alone again—which was a total change from how my old life used to be before coming to Dragonmont City.

The other part of me pondered what to do about the situation with the Beauman Hotel. I knew there was no hope of making the dwarves drop out, but more than anything I hoped to find a solution to this that involved nullifying Mrs. Pennington's negative influence.

I wasn't the only one stressed about her involvement. When I arrived in the kitchen that morning, I found a haggard Paulina sitting around her cup of coffee like it was a lifeboat in the wider ocean.

She took one look at me and knew I was suffering from a similar affliction.

"You too?" she asked.

I nodded. "I don't even know what to do today. Beyond keeping up Sadie's training."

"I know what you mean," replied Paulina. "It's not that I'm afraid to compete for the job—far from it. I just think the outcome is going to be a foregone conclusion. Mrs. Pennington is going to do everything possible just to stick it to us for what happened the day we met."

"Too bad we don't have enough money to pay her off," I said. "I think money is the only thing she understands. A well-placed bribe might go a long way."

"True, but even if we had the money, I don't want to win that way," replied Paulina. "I *know* we're better than those awful dwarves. I just want a fair contest to prove it."

“You know, it’s funny,” I said, circling the rim of my cup with my finger. “Mrs. Pennington acts like we wronged her, when it couldn’t be further from the truth. If anything, she owes us an apology for what she did, but she thinks it’s the other way around.”

Almost as soon as the words were out of my mouth, I had an idea. It was similar to the idea I had yesterday, but I thought this one had a higher chance of working out in our favor.

I wasted no time in telling Paulina, expecting her to tell me not to waste my time. It was a sign of our desperate situation that caused her to agree to it much quicker than I expected.

“What else have we got to lose?” she said. “We’ll never know if we don’t ask.”

Her acceptance was enough for me to get dressed and make my way over to Mrs. Pennington’s penthouse that morning. I arrived not long after ten, checking in with the humorless cyclops at the front desk before taking a ride to the top. Part of me wondered if she would even be home as I rang the bell, but I could hear movement inside as I waited outside.

When the door opened, I found myself face to face with Mrs. Pennington. Or rather, a Mrs. Pennington who’d woken up a short time ago and looked nothing like the prim and polished version I’d seen yesterday.

It was obvious too that she hadn’t replaced Paulina with her maid service. One glance inside revealed just what an absolute mess her penthouse was.

“What do you want?” asked Mrs. Pennington, glaring at me while her wings flapped about.

“Just a few minutes of your time,” I asked politely. “Is that okay?”

She looked at me suspiciously, bouncing from side to side until she nodded curtly. I followed her inside, stepping over an elven pizza box until we were standing in the kitchen. It reminded me of the first time I met Paulina, and even in this desperate situation, I took a moment to say a silent thank-you that she’d entered my life at all.

“So what do you want?” asked Mrs. Pennington, jarring me back to reality. “If you came here to try to change my mind, you’ve wasted your time.

You’re going to lose tomorrow, and there’s nothing you can do about—”

“I’m sorry, Mrs. Pennington,” I said, interrupting her.

She caught her breath in mid-sentence and stared at me. I smiled, hoping to disarm her with kindness as she struggled to find her words.

“I’m sorry about what happened the day we met,” I continued. “Especially about calling you a raging bitch. That’s the part I’m most sorry about. I understand why you did what you did, and you didn’t need to be called names for it.”

It was like there was a fried circuit in her brain. Her mouth opened but no sound came out. Clearly she wasn’t expecting this, and I saw all the anger melt away almost at once.

“What are you doing?” she asked finally.

“I’m just trying to make things right,” I said, before bending over to pick up a take-out box that was on the floor. I put it in the garbage while she kept her eyes trained on me. “And I feel bad about calling you such a vile name. And I know it hurt your feelings.”

“No one has called me such a thing before,” she admitted. “At least not to my face.”

“We definitely got off on the wrong foot,” I said. “But whatever happens tomorrow, all I’m asking for from you is a fair shot. Please don’t let our first interaction sour Paulina’s business. She’s worked really hard to get it to this point, and this contract would mean the world to us. We have no qualms about being in a clean-off, but we don’t want to go into it knowing that it’s rigged against us.”

Mrs. Pennington crossed her arms. “But the dwarves are good. They run a great maid service company.”

I shrugged. “We’re better. And we’ll prove it tomorrow. All I ask is that you judge us fairly. Can you do that for me? I’m here to apologize because it’s the right thing to do. Will you apologize to us by doing the right thing too?”

Mrs. Pennington didn’t answer that right away. She continued to appraise me, and I could tell she didn’t know what to say. I knew she still thought

her actions were justified, but I could also see a new emotion appear on her face.

Guilt.

I didn't want her answer right now. I also didn't want her to overthink this interaction, to the point where she thought I was pressuring her. So I prepared to make my exit.

"Just a fair chance tomorrow," I said, making for the door. "Let's start over again, okay? And I'm truly sorry about what I said."

Mrs. Pennington watched me until I got to the door, at which point I had to step over that pizza box again, reminding me of something else.

"Also, if you'd be open to it, can I help you find a new maid? I understand if there's too much history with Paulina, but I know my arrival robbed you of that. Just think it over and tell me tomorrow, okay?"

With one last smile and a small wave, I closed the door behind me.

I'd done all that I could do. Now it was in her hands.

"So how'd she take it? Did she yell at you? Talk over you like you were stupid? What happened?"

Kennedi pressed me for details once I got home, curious about what had happened with Mrs. Pennington. I gave her a play-by-play of our meeting, but I think she was disappointed when it didn't end with a more fitting conclusion.

"So you *didn't* smack some sense into her?" asked Kennedi finally. "And you didn't tell her to suck on deez nuts when you left?"

I chuckled. "Did you really think I was going to do that?"

"In my mind, you did. And it was as glorious as it sounds."

"No, I needed to be delicate with her. I think at the end of the day, it's not just a pride thing for Mrs. Pennington. I think her feelings were hurt and that's what I needed to address first. So I did."

Kennedi pursed her lips. “I didn’t know that old coot had a heart. I think there’s just a black hole there full of take-out boxes.”

“I think that’s her penthouse,” I joked. “It was messier than ever. She hasn’t replaced us yet, and I could tell it was affecting her.”

“I hope she takes you up on that offer tomorrow,” said Kennedi. “For everyone’s sake. Especially Paulina.”

“Where is she by the way?” I asked, not having seen her since I got home.

Kennedi winced. “She was training Sadie and getting frustrated. It was nothing that Sadie did, but I think the pressure is starting to get to her. She went to her room and locked the door. I’ve already tried knocking on it twice, but she won’t answer.”

My heart fell when I heard that. Of all the girls, Paulina had always seemed the most resilient to me. She was the glue that kept the business together, and if she was starting to lose heart, it could mean a domino effect that might be impossible to stop.

I decided to go see her as well. I marched up to her door and tried to open it, finding it locked. I knocked against the wood.

“Paulina, it’s me. Can we talk? I want to update you on Mrs. Pennington.”

I figured giving her some news would make her come to the door, but I didn’t hear movement inside. It was dead quiet for a few moments after the knock.

“I know you’re stressed,” I said next. “Everything’s going to be okay. Can you let me in?”

This time, I heard movement from inside the room. It sounded like she was on the bed, and she shifted her position. I wasn’t sure if she’d gotten up, but I was grateful to hear her footsteps as she neared the door.

She opened up the door, revealing a different Paulina than what I saw this morning. She’d been stressed this morning, but the crease on her forehead and the red eyes told me that she was close to throwing in the towel.

“I think I might have gotten through to Mrs. Pennington,” I said, smiling with optimism. “I think we’re going to get a fair shot tomorrow.”

There was no excitement on her face. “That’s nice,” she said, before moving to close the door.

I jammed my hand into the hole before it closed.

“Paulina, it’s going to be okay. We’re still in this. You don’t need to be so upset.”

I saw tears forming in the corners of her eyes. Whatever had happened since I was gone had really done a number on her. The only thing I wanted to do was wrap my arms around her and tell her everything would be okay.

But would she believe me? At least until all this was over?

I had my doubts.

“I hope so,” she said, before shutting the door gently but firmly.

Now I was the one who didn’t know what to say. I wasn’t sure if she needed space or company at this point, so I went with the obvious answer and retreated to the living room, where Sadie and Kennedi were waiting.

“No luck?” asked Kennedi.

I shook my head. “She still seems pretty upset.”

“This is all my fault, y’all,” said Sadie, burying her face in her hands. “She was trying to help me, and I wasn’t doing a good enough job. I think she just cracked under the pressure. I don’t know what to do.”

Kennedi put her arm around Sadie’s shoulder. “It’s not your fault. You’re still a beginner at this. I think Paulina just has too much on her plate right now. But it’s okay. We’ll fix it, won’t we, Kevin?”

Kennedi looked at me with a knowing look, like she needed me to put on a brave face for Sadie’s sake.

“Absolutely,” I said, lying through my teeth. “Everything will be just fine.”

Sadie nodded, and I could tell that helped. It didn’t make me feel any better though. What was I going to do about Paulina?

For the rest of the afternoon, her door stayed shut. Kennedi took over Sadie’s training in preparation for tomorrow, but I worried about Paulina’s

state of mind before we entered the big clean-off. I couldn't let this linger past today, which meant I had to do something.

Thankfully, I had an idea, but I needed some help to pull it off. And I definitely needed some money. Kennedi was willing to help me out with the cash to make that happen, especially once I told her what I planned.

"That just sounds so freaking romantic!" she gushed. "Now I'm jealous. I want that too!"

I laughed. "I promise you'll get your turn too. I hope this raises Paulina's spirits."

She handed over some coins to pay for it all, and when I attempted to apologize for the high amount, she shushed me.

"Just make it special for Paulina," she insisted. "Get her out of this funk. And let's win that stupid contract so we can have a hope of eating next month."

I took a shower and got dressed before attempting to get Paulina. I put on a casual outfit that I bought from Ms. Fly, saving my nice one for tomorrow's clean-off. I got Kennedi's stamp of approval once I was ready, and I made my way to Paulina's room and started banging on the door.

"Paulina! Will you open up? I have a surprise for you!"

I wasn't sure what to expect, but to my surprise, I heard her rush to the door moments later. Her eyes were still red and puffy when I saw her, but I could tell she was wondering what was up.

"You and I have a date tonight," I said. "And I'm not taking no for an answer."

As soon as the words were out, Kennedi swooped in behind me, much to Paulina's protests.

"No, I really don't feel like going on a date," said Paulina, crossing her arms.

"You don't get a vote tonight, Polly," informed Kennedi, carrying a dress in her arms. "I'm in total agreement with Kevin about his plan for you tonight. Trust me, you need this."

Paulina still protested, but it was very half-hearted, especially as Kennedi dragged her to the closet to help her get dressed. Once I was sure Paulina was going to go on with it, I retreated back to the living room to wait.

About ten minutes later, both women reappeared. Kennedi's smile was triumphant as she pulled Paulina along behind her.

Seeing Paulina in that dress nearly stopped my heart. I could not get over how gorgeous she looked. She was wearing a stunning charcoal-gray sleeveless dress that ended a few inches above her knees. It was cut low in the front, showing off the generous swell of her breasts before coming in tight around her tummy. It showed off the perfect amount of skin, while flattering everything that it still covered.

Kennedi had also helped to doll her up. Paulina was pretty enough to not need makeup, but Kennedi helped to fix her hair and put on some simple jewelry. There was even a ribbon in her hair, something that I thought raised the bar even higher.

I was flabbergasted. Even with her puffy eyes, she was so totally beautiful that it made my heart hurt to look at her.

"Just make sure you have her back by eleven," teased Kennedi. "I'll be waiting with my shotgun if she's not back by then!"

Paulina's mood had recovered slightly, mostly as she figured out what was actually happening.

"You've never even fired a gun, Kennedi."

Kennedi planted her hands on her hips. "And I hope Kevin won't give me any reason to start tonight. You behave yourself, young lady. And don't you dare come back pregnant, you hear?"

Paulina giggled, and it was wonderful to see her smile again. I reached over to take her hand, feeling like I was about to go to the big school dance.

Except this was going to be so much better.

We waved goodbye to Sadie and Paulina as we stepped out the door. The sun was already setting on the city, and I could tell she was very curious about my plan.

“So where are we going, Mr. Secrets?” she asked, and I was thrilled to see that her smile was back on her face.

“Well, part of my plan is already working,” I said, waiting at the curb. “I needed Kennedi’s help for the other part, which I think you’ll see shortly. Mostly, I just wanted to see your smile again. I hate seeing you so down in the dumps like you’ve been today.”

“I’m sorry,” she said, lowering her eyes. “You ever have those days where you feel useless? Like nothing you do matters?”

“All the time in my old life,” I said.

“I’m just having one of those days. And the pressure is getting to me.”

“Then let’s take your mind off of it. I don’t want you to think about work tonight. Or about the clean-off tomorrow.”

Paulina smiled. “Then what do you want me to think about?”

The timing was perfect. I turned my attention to the horizon, where I could see the flapping of wings just off in the distance. I raised my hand to point to it.

“I want you to start thinking about what parts of the city you’d love to see in the air?” I said, unable to hold back my grin as a majestic dragon swooped in low in front of us.

Paulina nearly jumped back in surprise, but she started to laugh once she saw the dragon swoop back around before coming in for a landing. The ground shook under our feet as the creature claws clanged against the road, and he let out a full-body shutter as he turned his snout toward us.

It was Kennedi who’d given me a crash course in dragons earlier, but there was nothing that compared with having a fully grown one in front of me. He looked to be at least a hundred and fifty feet long from snout to tail, with a body as big as our duplex. When those fearsome eyes landed on us, I was afraid for the briefest of moments.

Until he talked.

“Good evening, my lady,” said the dragon with a polished accent as he bowed his head. “And the same to you, sir. I’m here to be your chauffeur this evening.”

It was the damnedest thing I'd ever seen. I never expected such an elegant greeting from a dreadful-looking beast. I could tell that Paulina was shocked too, and we were unable to hold in our laughter at that moment.

"Was it something I said?" asked the dragon, using his claw to touch his nose. "Why are you laughing at me?"

"I think we're both just amazed at having this magnificent creature in front of us," I said, recovering nicely. "We're pleased to meet you!"

"Oh, well, the pleasure is all mine, sir," replied the dragon. "Please climb aboard. My boss told me you wanted to see the entire city from the air, correct?"

"That's right," I said, turning toward Paulina as she beamed back at me.

"This was your plan?" she asked, her eyes shimmering. "A dragon ride through the city?"

"I hoped this would be fun enough to get you out of your funk," I replied before leaning in close. "Is it working?"

To my surprise, Paulina grabbed my face with both hands and gave me a steamy kiss. When she pulled away, her eyes were dancing with mischief.

"You're a dream come true," she whispered, stroking my face before she let go. "I've never ridden a dragon before! They're usually too expensive."

"That makes two of us," I said, looking carefully at the creature's body. "So how do we do this?"

"It's very simple, sir," said the dragon. "Just put your foot on my wing and boost yourself up. Make sure you sit on the ridges of my spine and do hold on when I take off. Too many people forget to hold on and wind up sliding down my caboose."

I helped Paulina up first, climbing his scaly body until we reached the top. His spine was very pronounced, giving us several rows of seating. I let Paulina pick first, but she pulled me with her, so that we were sitting in the valley of one of his spine humps together. I put my hands around her waist while she pressed back against me.

"I think we're ready now!" called out Paulina.

“Fantastic,” replied the dragon. “Now I do need to remind you to not make any sudden movements. Keep your feet wrapped around my back, and please don’t stick your hands in the air. If you need anything at all during your flight, please just call my name, which is Rodrigo.”

Paulina and I laughed together as Rodrigo began flapping his wings. He leaned back on his rear legs and then jumped, using his wings to soar into the air while we held on behind him. We gained both distance and altitude extremely quickly, while Rodrigo’s wings flapped slowly. Before I knew it, we were hundreds of feet off the ground, soaring over the western part of the city.

I was utterly amazed by the view—both of the city and of Paulina. I could see Dragonmont City stretching out for miles beneath us, most of it now covered in shadows as the sun set. I could also see Paulina right in front of me and feel her hips with my hands. Strands of hair kept falling back toward my face, but I didn’t mind one bit.

There was no one else that I wanted to share this moment with than her.

“Kevin, this is so amazing!” she said finally, as we looked out on the glimmering buildings downtown. “I’ve never seen anything like this!”

“It’s really cool, isn’t it?”

“Cool doesn’t even begin to describe it!”

She was entirely right. Everything looked so different, so amazing, from the air, even the rows of penthouse buildings downtown. Seeing the Beauman Hotel from this distance was especially wonderful, with its giant wings that made it resemble Rodrigo.

More than anything, I just liked the sense of freedom that it inspired. It allowed us to truly forget the situation we were in and to enjoy the serenity of the city as it was blanketed by the night.

We flew for nearly forty-five minutes, crossing from one end of the city to the other several times before Rodrigo moved to the highest building in the city, landing on top of it with graceful aplomb. Paulina clapped excitedly once we landed, and then we climbed down off his back.

“You just need an hour, is that correct, sir?” asked Rodrigo as he prepared to take off again.

“An hour should be just fine,” I said. “Thank you so much, Rodrigo!”

“Very good. I will return to pick you up at that point,” he said as he started flapping his wings. “I hope you’re enjoying the service so far, sir!”

Rodrigo leapt from the building, spreading his wings as he took flight and flew off into the distance. Quite suddenly, Paulina and I were alone on the highest building in the city, looking out on the dazzling lights in every direction.

It didn’t take her long to rush to the edge. “Oh my word, Kevin! Look at all of this!”

I joined her by the railing, taking in all the buildings and the sea in the distance. It truly was a magical place—one that couldn’t help but inspire with its beauty.

“It’s a great place to call home,” I said, putting my hand over Paulina’s.

She squeezed my hand. “You really like it here? You don’t regret being reborn here, do you?”

I chuckled. “Are you crazy? Everything about this life is better than my old one. Every single thing and person. I love it here, Paulina. I wouldn’t trade this outcome for the world.”

She wrapped her arms around my shoulders. “Sometimes I get scared that it’s not living up to expectations. That your second chance shouldn’t be spent trying to keep my business alive.”

“There’s nothing else I’d rather do. This is so much more fulfilling than working in that soulless, stuffy office, with no friends, no family, no *nothing*. This was meant to happen. I’m sure of it.”

Paulina sighed happily. “Do you think that things are going to work out tomorrow? I know, I know, this is meant to be an escape and here I am talking about work. But you don’t think we’re wasting our time, do you?”

“You want my honest answer? I think we’re going to win tomorrow. I think we’re going to show those dwarves who runs the best maid service in the city.”

Paulina’s gorgeous eyes locked on me. “Yeah?”

“Yeah. Definitely.”

I could feel the wind entering her sails. Her spirits were rising again, coming out of the deep funk she was in this afternoon. It was what she needed to hear to put that crisis of confidence to rest, even if it was relatively small by comparison.

“You have so much to be proud of,” I said. “Everything you’ve built is coming to fruition. I don’t care what happens tomorrow. You’ve built an amazing business, Paulina.”

She smiled at me, wiping away a tear. “My parents would be happy, I think. They would be proud. This was always something that they dreamed about. Expanding, you know? Being the little guy that beats the big one. I think they would be happy.”

“I know they would be.”

“A lot of that is due to you,” she said. “You’re the one turning this around. I felt like I was lost at sea until I found you, but now you’re the one steering the ship to safety.”

“I think we’re steering together,” I said. “Us, Kennedi, and Sadie. We’re one family now, and we’re going to succeed together no matter what.”

“One family,” she repeated, smiling at me. “I think the four of us are more than capable of handling anything that’s thrown at us.”

“I couldn’t agree more. Honestly, Paulina, it’s the family I’ve always wanted, but it’s so much more than that. This is so much better than I ever could have dreamed of before coming here. You’re the reason why this is a reality.”

Paulina shook her head from side to side, her smile building. “This is so crazy. So very crazy. I don’t know what to do. I can barely handle it.”

“What are you talking about? The business is doing just fine—”

“Not the business,” she interrupted. “You! You’re so crazy, but in a crazy good way.”

I chuckled. “I’m glad you think so.”

“You came into my life like a whirlwind, and here you are right now, holding my heart entirely in your hands. It’s so quick! I never expected it, but nevertheless, here we are.”

My voice caught in my throat. Did she just say what I think she said?

“Your heart?” I asked casually.

Paulina beamed with a smile. “Yes, my heart. I love you. I’m *in* love with you. I don’t care that it’s only been a week. It doesn’t make any sense, it’s totally crazy, but I know that I love you, and I don’t want to picture my life without you in it.”

Within seconds, we were kissing. Not the wild kisses of sexual desire but those of two lovers surrendering to the inevitable. I moved my hands over every inch of Paulina’s skin, wanting nothing more than to keep her close to me. In return, she clung to me, keeping her lips glued together passionately.

I loved every second of being on top of the world with Paulina. And I made sure to tell her just what I was feeling inside too.

“I love you too, Paulina. And you’ll never have to picture your life without me in it.”

We were kissing again, but this time the passion couldn’t be tamed. My desire to be inside Paulina at that moment came out of nowhere, but I was desperate to make it a reality.

Apparently, Rodrigo must have planned ahead. I noticed a small basket of blankets not far from where he landed earlier. I had no idea how he got it there without us noticing, but I wasn’t about to look a gift horse in the mouth.

I grabbed the blankets, making a small little bed for us on the top of that building. It was exceptionally hard to do, especially since Paulina’s lips were practically glued to mine the entire time.

“Paulina,” I said, laughing between kisses. “Let me put the blankets down at least.”

“I don’t care,” she insisted, keeping a tight grip on my neck as our lips stayed glued together.

Eventually, our clothes went flying. I watched that gorgeous charcoal-gray dress go flying, followed quickly by her bra and panties. It happened so quickly that I couldn't keep track of it. The only thing I knew was that I had this naked green goddess in my arms, and she was lining my cock up with her slick, wet entrance.

"Oh fuck," she moaned once I slid inside. "Make love to me, Kevin."

On top of that building, I ravished her. Paulina and I spent the next half hour making slow, deliberate, and tender love. She clung to me as orgasm after orgasm assaulted her body, and when I came inside her at the very end, everything was complete.

I didn't know if I could be any happier.

We wrapped our bodies in blankets and moved toward the edge. I held this gorgeous woman in my arms as we looked out on the dark city, totally content.

"Thank you," she whispered finally, after a few moments of silence.

"Thank you for what?"

"For this. For taking me out tonight. For giving me my dream date. For being you. For turning this day around. For turning my *life* around. Thank you so much."

I kissed her forehead. "It's really been the perfect night, hasn't it?"

She looked at me and smiled. "The first of many, I think."

"You couldn't be more right about that."

By the time Rodrigo came back, we'd dressed and stacked the blankets into a neat little pile back inside the basket. I didn't know for sure, but I could have sworn the dragon had an extra twinkle in his eye when he looked at me, and I wondered if he had any idea what happened with us tonight.

I didn't care either way. Paulina was smiling again, and I think we were both ready for what tomorrow would bring.

No matter what, we would weather this storm together.

Chapter Twenty-Three

THE NEXT MORNING was unlike any other that I'd spent so far in Dragonmont City.

The duplex was quiet, but it wasn't because everyone was still sleeping. All four of us woke up early and were in the kitchen eating a meager breakfast without much in the way of conversation.

There were just too many nerves tied up in this. Even for idle chatter.

At least Paulina's spirits seemed strong this morning. And Kennedi and Sadie had practically swooned when I told them what happened, even to the effect of wanting to get their own date nights on the calendar too.

Sadie was also the picture of readiness this morning. She looked determined to impress in her first clean-off, and she wasted no time in telling us all that she learned on our walk over to the Beauman.

"Always sweep first and then mop afterward," she recited. "A used rag is a dirty rag—always pull a fresh one before you think you need it. And an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

"I'd say she's ready," said Kennedi, clearly impressed. "My oldest friend is getting her trial by fire today, but she's totally going to kick ass!"

Sadie giggled. "Thanks for the vote of confidence, y'all. I just hope I don't screw it up."

"You'll be just fine," said Paulina. "We all will. Let's show those dwarves that we mean business."

It was a very confident team that rode the elevator up to the lobby of the Beauman penthouses. When we emerged, I could see the dwarves already waiting, their hairy beards practically twitching as they glared at us. There were only three of them today—Esther, Enid, and one other girl that I recognized from two days ago.

I didn't so much as spare them a second look. I was determined to ignore them, but Esther had other ideas.

"So it looks like the scabs showed up after all," she said, using her broom to support her weight. "And here I thought they were going to chicken

out!”

“We’re here to compete,” said Paulina, flipping her hair dramatically as we all stared down the dwarves. “And we’re here to win.”

“Too bad those two things aren’t going to go together,” sneered Enid. “At least not for all of you!”

“Remind me when we win to buy you all beard trimmers,” I snapped. “Maybe then you’ll stop being mistaken for men.”

You could have heard a pin drop in that lobby after I said it. I saw rage appear on both Esther and Enid’s faces, until they had to be held back by their friend.

“You just wait!” seethed Esther. “You’ll regret that remark! I promise you!”

Both groups separated, and we checked in with the girl at the front desk. It didn’t take long for the members of the board to arrive. Auggie looked very friendly like usual. Ms. Hoffman was her usual tranquil self.

But it was Mrs. Pennington that I couldn’t read. She didn’t go out of her way to glance at our team, but the one time that we made eye contact, she didn’t look like she hated me.

I didn’t know if that was to be considered progress or not. I guess time would tell.

“Perfect, you’re both here on time,” said Ms. Hoffman, clapping her hands. “Let’s go up two floors to the first penthouse, and we’ll get started!”

Thankfully, we took two elevators. Our group went with the members of the board while Esther and the dwarves caught the next one. By the time we’d all gathered on the floor, there were two more fairy ladies up there that I didn’t recognize, but both of them smiled at me while we waited for this to begin. Finally, Ms. Hoffman let us know the rules.

“Okay, so this is what we’re going to do,” she explained. “The clean-off will take place in two separate penthouses—one on this floor and one on the floor above us. Both fairies that live in the penthouses have agreed to suspend maid service for a full week, and we can confirm that they are

very messy indeed. One penthouse will be assigned to Paulina and her team, while the other will be assigned to Esther and her team."

So far that seemed fair enough, and there were no questions. I was still wondering about the addition of the new ladies though, but Ms. Hoffman tackled that next.

"In terms of judging, we brought in two fairies that will stay with each team for the entire duration of the clean-off," she explained. "They are only there to keep an eye on you and make sure there is no cheating in any way, shape, or form. The three board members will be making our rounds through each penthouse during the clean-off to help with the judging process."

"How would we cheat in a clean-off?" I whispered to Kennedi right next to me.

"Bringing in extra help on the sly," she replied. "I've seen it before where some companies have invited extra help and tried to keep them hidden from view just to get a leg up. Either that or deliberate sabotage of another team by making their area messier. It's a dirty business."

I chuckled. "I had no idea."

Kennedi grinned at me before we returned our attention to Ms. Hoffman.

"Within each penthouse, each maid will be assigned one room to clean," continued Ms. Hoffman. "Those rooms will consist of the kitchen, the bathroom, and finally, the bedroom, seeing as there are three maids per team. Each maid will stay in their assigned room until the room is completely clean. You may not move from your assigned room to help another maid in her room. Once you are finished, you will move to the foyer and wait for the end of the clean-off. For the duration, you will be allowed a maximum time of thirty minutes of cleaning before it's over. Do we have any questions?"

"Yeah, I have a question," said Esther with a sassy tone. "When my team wins, how soon will we find out our start date?"

I rolled my eyes at the question, but I was grateful that Ms. Hoffman seemed poised enough to answer it neutrally.

“The winning team will start tomorrow,” she said. “I have a check in my bag right now for advanced payment for the winning team, so it all comes down to today.”

That definitely perked all of us up. Knowing that we could have a decent check today would certainly put an end to our money problems. I was more than ready to begin, but first we had to pick our room assignments.

“Here’s what I think we should do,” said Paulina to just our team moments later. “I’m going to take the kitchen. Usually that’s the most technical of all the cleans. Kennedi, I want you to take the bathroom.”

Kennedi gave her a playful salute. “Reporting for duty, ma’am!”

“And Sadie, you take the bedroom. It’s the easiest of the three and better suited for a beginner.”

“Phew,” replied Sadie. “I really didn’t want the bathroom in a high-pressure contest.”

“And me?” I asked. “What can I do?”

Paulina gave me a sly grin. “Be our cheerleader?”

“I think I can do that.”

With our assignments set, it was time to begin. Both teams were allowed to inspect each penthouse, if only to make sure they were both reasonably messy and a fair contest. I saw no real difference between the two. Each penthouse looked pretty messy, even by fairy standards, and I knew that thirty minutes in each room would definitely be needed to get it in tip-top shape.

Once the initial inspection was over, it was time to begin. We took the penthouse on the lower floor, separating from the dwarves. Auggie came with us, as did the other newer fairy who was assigned to our team.

“Your team is going to do a great job!” said Auggie enthusiastically once we were separated. “Just between you and me, I really hope you win. I’m not a big fan of those dwarves.”

“They’re kinda rude, aren’t they?” I said, agreeing with her.

Auggie blew air from her lips as she flapped around me. “If it were up to me, this clean-off wouldn’t be necessary. I’d have picked your company already!”

“Thank you for that,” I said, smiling politely. “Hopefully, we’ll give you another reason to pick us today.”

She reached over to pat my cheek in a grandmotherly fashion. “I know you will, dear. I just know it!”

By that point, the other fairy came over to me while giving me a funny look. “I’m here to make sure you don’t intervene in the cleaning, especially since you’re not a maid. What’s your role with the company?”

“I’m their business advisor,” I explained. “And that’s perfectly fine. I’m not going to touch a thing.”

“You can’t pass advice to the maids,” she informed me. “That’s considered cheating. You may enter the rooms, but you can’t talk to them. Do you understand?”

I thought her rules were being a little too strict, but I understood how seriously they took this. It wasn’t going to be me who ruined this.

“I understand.”

“Perfect, thank you,” she said. “Let’s get ready to begin.”

The clean-off was slated to start at nine-thirty. That was only two minutes away, so each girl grabbed their cleaning kit and entered their respective rooms.

“Good luck!” I told each of them. “I know you don’t need it, but I’m telling you anyway. You’re going to do amazing.”

Kennedi raised her chin. “I’m going to clean the *shit* out of that bathroom.”

Paulina giggled. “Uh, yeah, that’s the idea after all.”

“No, I meant like metaphorically speaking.”

“I know, Ken, I’m just teasing you.”

We laughed and then looked at Sadie, who looked nervous but confident as she clutched her mop. I gave her a quick kiss on the lips. “You’ll be perfect.”

“I really hope so,” she said. “I’m scared I’m going to mess this up for us.”

“You won’t. Just remember everything that Paulina and Kennedi taught you. You’ll be great!”

That seemed to help, but I could still see some nerves on face as we separated. I knew I’d be feeling the same way in my first clean-off, but I also knew that Sadie wouldn’t let it take her down either.

As soon as the clock struck nine-thirty, the clean-off was officially on. Each of the girls broke down their kit and got started, with Paulina attacking the dirty dishes in the sink as her first task.

I didn’t realize just how fast the clean-off would go. I thought that waiting around for thirty minutes was going to be agonizingly-slow, but the time flew by as I made my frequent rounds to see each of the girls.

And they were all doing a spectacular job. Paulina had that kitchen shining in no time at all. Kennedi attacked the shower, wiping it down so that it had that wonderful “just-cleaned” smell to it once more. Even Sadie was doing a great job. I was very pleased to see the crease in the bed sheets, almost as if she’d been doing it for years.

A few times during the clean-off, I saw Mrs. Pennington come down to our penthouse. I didn’t try to engage her in conversation, but I watched her closely to see if I could figure out which way she was leaning. Like before, her body language gave no obvious clues, but she didn’t meet my eye contact any time we were in the same room.

I wondered if that was my answer right there. I tried not to dwell on it, choosing instead to keep my focus on the wonderful job the girls were doing.

It was very obvious to me that this team deserved to win this. I had no idea how things were going upstairs, but I couldn’t see a single weak link in the chain. By the time we reached ten o’clock, I had a grin plastered to my face that just wouldn’t go away.

The penthouse was sparkling clean. The girls were sweaty but very satisfied with their jobs, and I hugged each of them in turn.

“I thought you said you’d never done a clean-off before,” I teased Sadie. “From what I saw, it’s like you’ve been doing it for years!”

“Really?” she asked. “You really think so?”

“I know so,” I said, kissing her cheek. “I’m so proud of you.”

“I really want to see what those dwarf bitches did upstairs,” said Kennedi.

“I know, me too,” said an anxious Paulina. “I think we did a great job, but I want to know what theirs looks like too.”

“We’re about to get our chance,” I said as the fairy judge came around.

“Okay, I’m going to ask your team to go upstairs to do a visual inspection of the other penthouse,” she announced. “The dwarves will do the same to this one, and then both teams will wait in the foyer while the members of the board inspect each penthouse and then vote on the results.”

We waited for one of the fairies to come down to get us, which happened to be Ms. Hoffman. She led us upstairs while we passed the dwarves, who could only smirk at us as they were led to our penthouse.

Kennedi balled her fists. “What I wouldn’t give to be able to wipe that smirk off their faces.”

“I’d actually pay to watch that happen,” said Sadie with a giggle.

We were led upstairs, where we were watched very closely by the other fairy official and Ms. Hoffman as we did our inspection.

I didn’t have high hopes that we would find anything out of the ordinary, and that ended up being the case. Their penthouse looked just as clean as ours, and my stomach dropped when I realized there would be no clear winner.

As we were led downstairs to the foyer to await judgment, we found the dwarves already there. And to make matters even worse, Esther couldn’t have looked happier.

No sooner were both groups alone than she rounded on Paulina and stuck out her fat, hairy finger.

“Ha! I knew you were a bunch of scabs! You’ve already lost!” said Esther.

“What the hell are you talking about?” replied Paulina, crossing her arms.

Esther elbowed Enid in the side. “Tell her, Enid. What did you see in their bathroom?”

“One long-ass purple hair on the sink counter,” replied Enid as we all looked at Kennedi, who now appeared mortified. “Ten guesses on which goblin girl that hair belongs to!”

“I didn’t leave any hairs behind!” said Kennedi defensively.

“It’s too late!” said a triumphant Esther. “We already saw it, and you better believe those fairies are going to see it too! You’re toast! Better luck next time, Paulina. You should have known better than to go against us!”

I could already see Kennedi’s anger exploding as she stormed closer to the dwarves. I intervened quickly, pulling her away to the other side in an effort to cool off.

“Let me go,” said Kennedi. “I’m going to smack all three of them! I’m really going to do it!”

“They’re just trying to get inside your head!” I said. “You didn’t actually leave a hair behind.”

My confidence was shattered with what Paulina said next. She grabbed her friend by the shoulders. “Right, Kennedi? You didn’t leave any hairs behind? Not like the last time?”

“Wait,” I interrupted. “This happened before?”

“Once,” said Paulina, wincing. “Kennedi, you checked the sink before you left?”

“I swear I did!” said Kennedi. “I really don’t think I left anything behind!”

Paulina didn’t seem so sure, and I realized that if she’d seen it happen before, it could definitely happen again. The feeling in the pit of my stomach got worse.

If the fairies saw the hair, they could definitely rule against us. But was there any chance of it escaping their detection?

Maybe they wouldn’t even notice?

I was robbed of that notion the moment all three fairy board members came outside our penthouse after the judging. Auggie and Ms. Hoffman had assumed neutral expressions, but it was the look on Mrs. Pennington’s face that did me in.

She stared at me in such a way to make me profoundly uncomfortable. And when that lip curled upward in a cruel smirk, I knew the horrible truth.

She’d found the hair. And we were going to lose.

“I want to thank both companies for being here today!” said Ms. Hoffman. “What a lovely clean-off this was! The only thing that makes this day difficult is the decision that we have in front of us, especially seeing that we had to be unanimous. However, I’m happy to report that we have a winner.”

I realized I was holding my breath and had to remind myself to breathe. I just couldn’t get over that look in Mrs. Pennington’s eyes—the one that seemed to signal that she was about to get her revenge on us.

“I’m going to turn it over to Mrs. Pennington to announce the results,” said Ms. Hoffman, gesturing to her friend. “How did we select the winner, Mrs. Pennington?”

“It was quite simple in the end,” said Mrs. Pennington, her words making me cringe on the inside. “But ultimately, there was one team that made a simple mistake that allowed us to pick the winner. And it was something they left behind that did them in.”

I couldn’t help it. We all glanced over at Kennedi, who looked like she was about to burst into tears. I put my arm around her waist, if only to give her a little bit of my strength. Mistakes happened, and I just hoped she wouldn’t beat herself up too much for it.

“Unfortunately, we just couldn’t ignore that item left behind,” said Mrs. Pennington, making direct eye contact with me as she reached behind her back. She pulled out a bottle of shower cleaner and held it in front of her. “This is what was left behind in the upper penthouse.”

We all gasped. Looks of bewilderment appeared on the girls' faces until we heard a yell right next to us as Esther smacked Enid across the face.

"Damn you, Enid! How could you forget that!"

Enid covered her hairy face with her hands and started to sob.

Mrs. Pennington gave me a sympathetic look as my heart felt weightless for the first time that morning. "The shower cleaner wasn't put away correctly in the upper penthouse. Therefore, it is our judgment that Goblin Girl Maid Service is the winner of the exclusive Beauman Hotel contract!"

I could barely tell you what happened next. Before I knew it, several green arms had wrapped around my body as the girls crushed the life out of me. I'd never seen such happiness before—happiness that was present on everyone's face at the same time.

"We did it!" shrieked Paulina. "We really won!"

"I can't believe it! We got the job, y'all!" said Sadie in that adorable Southern accent.

Kennedi didn't say anything at all. She was too busy kissing me, not that I had any complaints. It was damn near the perfect moment, and I was so proud of my team that I could burst.

And I was also too happy to watch the dwarves march away in defeat. Especially when they flipped the bird at us as they moved closer to the elevator.

"Right back at you!" roared Kennedi, giving them a double bird with two fingers.

As soon as we were done celebrating, we watched as Ms. Hoffman pressed a check into Paulina's hands. Her eyes went as wide as saucers when she saw the amount.

"Congratulations," said Ms. Hoffman warmly. "You've really earned this. We were silently rooting for your team, and I'm so happy that you proved us right."

"I'm so happy too!" said Paulina before she turned to show me the amount on the check. I almost fainted when I saw it.

“Now we’ll be able to hire more girls!” she said with excitement. “And we can truly expand!”

I said the only thing that made sense to me at that moment. “Your parents would be so proud of you, Paulina. Just like I am.”

She blushed a deep green color and then she was in my arms, whispering how much she loved me.

The feeling was entirely mutual.

Chapter Twenty-Four

WITH THE CHECK in our hands, there were only a few things left to do.

Auggie was the first to give us a personal congratulations, hugging all of us in turn before promising to introduce us to some of her friends who might also need maid service. I really enjoyed meeting her, and I was grateful for any further offers of jobs that might come our way.

Ms. Hoffman's aloofness had melted away entirely, especially as she told Paulina what to expect for tomorrow. I got the impression that she was a really nice person, and I could tell that working for her would be a great thing.

After Ms. Hoffman and Auggie left, one board member remained that we hadn't talked to yet. Mrs. Pennington made her way forward, and for the first time since I met her, she was smiling at us.

"Well done today, Paulina," she said, extending her hand. "And the same for you, Kevin. Congratulations on winning the clean-off."

"Thank you, Mrs. Pennington," I said genuinely. "It means the world to us to win this contract."

"Yes, I can see that," she said. "And there's something else I need to say." She turned toward Paulina. "I'm very sorry for the way I treated you last week. It was wrong of me to fire you, and I really hope that you'll forgive me."

Paulina's mouth dropped open, as did mine. It was the last thing we expected from vindictive Mrs. Pennington, but that's when I realized that she wasn't as vindictive as I thought.

"Water under the bridge," replied Paulina with a half-laugh. "Don't think anything of it!"

"I'd like to see if you would come back to work for me?" asked Mrs. Pennington. "It will be different this time, I promise you. I really need a maid. My penthouse looks even worse than these two did at the start of the day. Would you consider having me back as a client?"

Paulina didn’t even need to think about it. She reached over to hug Mrs. Pennington, making the old fairy laugh.

“Of course,” replied Paulina. “I’d love a chance to start over.”

“Yes, starting over is good,” agreed Mrs. Pennington. “Thank you.”

Mrs. Pennington let her go and then turned her attention to me once Paulina walked away.

“Thank you for visiting me yesterday,” she said. “And for apologizing. I owed you both an apology too. I guess I was just too bullheaded to do it first.”

“You’re a good person, Mrs. Pennington,” I said. “And I’m really sorry it took me until now just to realize it.”

She gave me a smile. “I’m not too old to change. And I recognize that the best team got the job. However, you might want to tell Kennedi to invest in a hair net for her next job.”

With that, she extended her hand, placing something in mine. When I looked closer, it was one long strand of very purple hair.

So the dwarves hadn’t been lying after all. It really had been left behind.

“You won fair and square,” said Mrs. Pennington when I opened my mouth to explain. “What they did was a worse offense, so I’m hoping that hair can just be our little secret, right? You won’t tell Ms. Hoffman on me, right?”

I grinned. “Not a chance, Mrs. P. Not a chance at all.”

She matched my grin, and we hugged for the first time. I never would have imagined that I’d be here hugging Mrs. Pennington after what happened last week, but it was just another reminder of how magical Dragonmont City really was.

After that, Mrs. Pennington hugged Kennedi and Sadie before departing. We went down the elevators and left the building, with a serious spring in our steps.

For half the walk home, I listened to both Kennedi and Sadie talk about all the things they wanted to do now that we had the money to do so. I was

excited for all of them, but even more so when Paulina hung back to talk to me alone.

“So much of this is because of you!” she said, her eyes brimming with happiness. “I don’t think today would have happened if you hadn’t been reborn here.”

“Nonsense,” I said modestly. “You would still be here.”

Paulina shook her head. “Nope. Not even close. You got us rolling in the right direction, and this was the result. So because of that, I had something prepared this morning just in case.”

She handed me a check that made my eyes bulge.

“Paulina! What is this?”

“Your share of the check,” she said impishly. “For everything you’ve done. You deserve this.”

“You’re sure about this? Really?” I asked.

She nodded. “Absolutely. You’re just as much a part of Goblin Girl Maid Service as we are. Besides, I’m still your guardian, remember? And I think I owe you some spending money.”

“This is a lot more than just spending money.”

“It’s the first of many more checks,” she said happily. “Together, we make quite the team, don’t you think?”

I reached over and squeezed her hand. “I really do. We’re a great team. But you know what this means now, don’t you?”

She raised an eyebrow. “No, what?”

“I have some presents I need to buy!”

Later that evening, we celebrated the best way we knew how. We were on the rooftop terrace, with the jets on in the hot tub. All the girls were wearing their bikinis, and I had a hard time concentrating on anything other than the gorgeous swell of their cleavages.

We had a tray of freshly-baked zander nut cookies near the tub. There was 80s music playing in the background, and Kennedi was singing along like usual.

“Ohhhh, I wanna dance with somebodyyyyy!” sang Kennedi, before sliding her arms around me. “I wannnna feel the *heat* with somebodyyyy!”

Next to us there was a small table of presents, the results of various shopping trips taken throughout the day. I’d spent the entire afternoon trying to find the right gift for each of the girls, and I was really excited to see their reactions when they opened them.

So excited that I couldn’t wait anymore.

“Okay, okay, let me show you all what I got you!” I said, laughing as I pulled myself free from Kennedi. “The first gift goes to Sadie!”

I handed a rectangular-shaped box to her. “Just don’t open it over the water or you could damage it.”

Sadie smiled as she ripped open the box. “You didn’t need to get me anything, Kevin. Why would you—oh my freakin’ gosh! It’s a laptop!”

Sadie’s mouth fell open as she pulled out the brand new laptop that I’d just purchased earlier with my new funds. She looked on in amazement as she held the box in the air.

“Now you can really retire the old one you have,” I said. “This one will be easy to use and won’t take a century to load a new window.”

Sadie put the box down on the table and quickly wrapped her arms around my neck, pressing her amazing body against mine. “Thank you so much. You have no idea what this means to me!”

I kissed her. “We’re so lucky to have you on this team.”

Kennedi clapped her hands together. “Okay, do me next, do me next!”

Paulina snickered. “Not the first time you’ve said that, is it?”

Kennedi grinned. “Believe me, it won’t be the last time I tell Kevin that tonight either!”

I reached across the table and picked up a heavy box. “Same rules go for you. Don’t get it wet, okay?”

Kennedi ripped off the paper, revealing her present for all of us. She looked positively flabbergasted once she was what it was.

“A PlayStation 2?! Kevin, is this for real?”

“Now we can play *Gran Turismo 4*,” I said with a grin. “Although I have to warn you. I’m really good at it.”

Tears appeared in her eyes as she hugged me. “Thank you. Thank you so much. This makes me so happy.”

She wasn’t the only one. I could see tears in Paulina’s eyes too, and I knew this had gone a long way into righting the wrongs caused by that loan shark.

My last gift was for Paulina. It was much smaller than the other gifts, but no less valuable. She eyed it suspiciously when I passed it over.

“This gift is in the same vein as Kennedi’s gift,” I explained. “Righting the wrongs of the past.”

Tears were already flowing down her face as she realized what it was. She ripped open the gift wrap and opened the small box inside.

It was a golden necklace. It had cost me what was left of my check from earlier, but it was so worth it.

“I wanted it to replace the one that you don’t have anymore, the one your parents got you,” I said. “I really hope you like it. I didn’t know what style to get but—”

“It’s perfect,” interrupted Paulina before holding it out to me. “Will you put it on me?”

I took it from her hands as she turned around. I pushed the clasp in place once it was around her neck and waited for her to turn around.

“You look breathtaking,” I said once I saw it. “Even more than usual.”

Paulina wrapped her arms around me and didn’t let go.

“You really hit a home run with these gifts, Kevin,” said Sadie moments later. “So very good.”

“Wait until he sees ours,” said Kennedi, and I gave her a shocked glance. “What? You didn’t think you were the only one that went shopping today, did you?”

Now it was their turn. Suddenly, I was awash with presents too. Sadie got me some clothes with her funds, adding a few more outfits that I could wear. I was pleased to see that her fashion sense was just as good (if not better) than Ms. Fly’s, and I thanked her profusely for the new digs.

Kennedi gifted me a newer racing game—*Forza Horizon 5*, for use on her Xbox.

“I figured I ought to learn how to kick your ass on a more recent game,” said Kennedi with a grin.

“You’ll try, but I wish you luck in kicking *my* ass!”

The last gift was small, just like mine was to Paulina. She handed the small box over to me shyly.

“This just makes official what we already know,” she explained once I opened it up.

I found a name plaque inside. My name was listed in bright letting, right under the initials of CHO.

“Chief Handsome Officer,” said Paulina with a giggle. “Of Goblin Girl Maid Service.”

I couldn’t hold back my laughter. “I love it. I just need a desk now to put it on!”

“Maybe with our next check, you’ll be able to get one!” said Sadie.

“I can’t wait. Seriously, thank you all for these gifts. They mean the world to me.”

“And I can’t wait to play some of these with you!” said Kennedi. “Speaking of, what should we do for the rest of the night? Should we go have a tournament? *Mario Kart*? *Forza Horizon 5*? Or should we just get drunk and have a big orgy together?”

“I think we know which one you really want to do,” snickered Sadie.

While the three of us came up with ideas, Paulina stood up and grabbed her towel. “I really should do some more work though. Yes, we have the Beauman contract, but I should be looking for the next big thing. We also really need to hire more girls. I need to find the next batch of maids!”

All of us gave her a deadpan stare. “Paulina, you can’t be serious,” I said. “Stay with us. You don’t need to be working right now.”

Paulina stood still for a few moments before she cracked a smile. “Just kidding!”

“So not funny, Paulina,” said Kennedi with a pout.

Paulina sat back down. “I thought it was a *little* funny.”

I responded by tickling her, making her gasp for air before she surrendered.

“Okay, I’m sorry,” said Paulina, still giggling. “I learned my lesson! There’s no other place I’d rather be than right here in this tub with all of you.”

“That’s better,” said Sadie. “And I couldn’t agree more. I love what we have here so much.”

“We’re like our own family,” said Kennedi. “And the future couldn’t look any brighter!”

I had to agree with Kennedi, especially as I spaced out for a second. Our future looked *great*. The business was really taking off, and everyone seemed happy. I felt like my relationships with each woman was solid, and for the first time in my life, I felt like I really belonged somewhere.

Paulina was very right when she mentioned how crazy all this was last night. It had only been a week, and yet being with them felt more like home than anything I’d experienced in my old life.

This was where I was meant to be. At that moment, I surrendered any lingering doubts or pain regarding my old life.

Everything had changed for the better.

I felt Paulina press against my side. “What are you thinking about?” she asked while the other two women chattered amongst themselves.

I kissed her. “I’m home, Paulina. For the first time in my life, I’m really home.”

She smiled. “I couldn’t agree more.”

Goblin Girl Maid Service 2

A Slice-of-Life Fantasy Adventure

The Story So Far

I never expected to be reborn into a magical city where all kinds of fantasy creatures lived and worked together, but that's just what happened when I died and landed in Dragonmont City. After a mishap with the fairy overlord class of the city, I found my fate tied to Paulina and Kennedi—two stunning goblin girls trying to run their own maid service. With a little hard work and the addition of a third girl, Sadie, we were able to land our biggest client ever, keeping our struggling business afloat!

But with new additions comes new challenges. GGMS needs to expand if it's going to survive. Join us now for the beginning of book 2!

Chapter One

"Oh, *Kevin*? Would you put some sunscreen on my back, please?"

"Yes, please, do me next, Kevin? Do me, please!"

I could only smile at what my life had become. It was a life that I would have only dreamed about before I found myself in the fantastical Dragonmont City, but now it was my everyday reality.

"Hang on a second," I said, grabbing a bottle of mint-green goblin sunscreen and squirting a generous amount on Kennedi's exposed shoulders.

Kennedi pulled her long, purple hair away from her shoulders and let out a soft exhale once I started to rub the cream into her skin.

"Mmm," moaned Kennedi softly. "I just love how you touch me. Your fingers are like crack to me."

On the other side of the terrace, Sadie pulled her shirt over her head, revealing a bright-red bikini that was a perfect match for her hair. She grabbed a glass of sweet tea and downed it, something that I found oddly ironic since it seemed to match her accent.

Where I came from, Sadie would have been the perfect southern belle, but I wasn't in the United States any longer. After my untimely death thanks to a crashing window-cleaning platform, I found myself here in Dragonmont City, where I received a second chance at life.

I made the most of it here in this duplex, living with Kennedi, Sadie, and our other roomie, Paulina, who was working at the moment. Truthfully, calling them roomies was a bit of an understatement.

There wasn't a single night that I went to bed alone. You see, goblin girls have a natural attraction to human men, and that meant I quickly found myself in a harem relationship with all three goblin beauties. Though, it wasn't all sunshine and daisies.

"Mmm, *fuck*," moaned Kennedi as I kept rubbing her lower back. She turned around and reached her hand under my waistband. "This is so good that I feel like I need to return the favor."

Okay, I lied. It was definitely sunshine and daisies. I loved every minute of being here.

“Save some for me,” said Sadie with a scowl as she pushed Kennedi out of the way and positioned herself in front of me. “You’ve hogged him for the last three nights! I have needs too, yah know?”

Kennedi planted her hands on her green hips. Her golden bikini caught the sun with just the right angle so that it made her appear to be glowing.

“You’re lucky we’re friends, Sadie,” she said, blowing a strand of hair out of her face. “Okay, I suppose you can have a night of orgasmic bliss with our boyfriend.”

Sadie giggled. “So magnanimous of you.”

“I know, right? I’m such a people-pleaser.”

Sadie turned and gave me a long look, which only served to make me laugh.

“Sometimes, I wonder how my life could get any better,” I said, still chuckling as I squirted some sunscreen on Sadie’s shoulders.

“More goblin girls?” suggested Kennedi innocently. “Adding goblin girls seems to be the answer to most questions.”

“I don’t know if I can handle any more of you,” I said honestly. “Although I bet Paulina would agree with you when it comes to the business!”

All four of us were part of the same company, which was being run by Paulina and Kennedi when I met them. It was called Goblin Girl Maid Service, and it provided enough work to keep all of us busy throughout the day. Kennedi and Sadie had only just gotten home from their shifts, which was why they were able to let loose and enjoy the hot tub with me.

As for me, I’d taken over the business end for the most part, although I did have trouble getting Paulina to fully let go of it. Old habits die hard.

“Blah, no business talk right now,” said Sadie as all three of us stepped into the hot tub. “It’s been a long day and I just want to soak.”

“Hard day, Sadie?” asked Kennedi. “Did the Freeman place wear you out?”

Sadie's response was visual as her shoulders slumped forward. "I swear they try to use every single dish in their cabinets before I get there! The amount of mess that two people produce over the course of three days is like some kind of record!"

Kennedi giggled. "I wasn't sad to pass that contract over to you. You had no idea that fairies could be that messy, did you?"

"Wait a second, you passed them to me on purpose?" asked Sadie.

Kennedi wrapped her arms around her own shoulders. "Oops!"

"Oh, I'm so going to get you back," grumbled Sadie.

"You're welcome to race me in *Mario Kart* any time!"

"But you're just going to win . . ."

"Sadie has a point," I added. "Kennedi is unnaturally good at *Mario Kart*."

Kennedi reached over and patted my cheek lovingly. "Oh lover, I'm unnaturally good at many things."

"Like humility?" asked Sadie, which made us both laugh.

"Never did manage to learn that one," said Kennedi with a shrug. "But when you're so good at everything, you don't really need it."

"I'm just saying maybe we try a different game this time," said Sadie. "Something that's not a racing game, okay?"

Kennedi pursed her lips. "What did you have in mind?"

"Have you ever tried grand strategy games?"

I listened in amusement as they talked about the finer points of grand strategy games for the next five minutes. Back on Earth, gaming was something that most human women couldn't care less about. Here in Dragonmont City though, I found that goblin girls liked gaming almost as much as I did.

"Okay, it's settled," said Sadie finally, as a triumphant look appeared on her face. "One multiplayer round. You versus me. *Hearts of Iron 4*. You're so going down!"

“The only person going down around here is me! On Kevin!” said Kennedi, raising her finger.

I chuckled. “You need to work on your smack talk a little more.”

“What?” she said innocently. “That wasn’t good?”

I only had less than a minute to explain what was wrong with her smack talk when Paulina arrived home. Naturally, my attention drifted to her as she walked across the rooftop terrace toward the hot tub.

Of all the girls I lived with, I felt a special connection with Paulina. She was the first one I met on the day I was reborn, when I accidentally caused her to lose her job. Though we didn’t have the most auspicious start, we grew close quickly due to our natural chemistry.

There was also the not-so-small factor of Paulina’s good looks. She could have made a dead man hard with those soft curves, lush, green skin, and gorgeous, shiny, dark hair. There were countless times that I laid in bed with her at night wondering how such a perfect creature could have been created.

The best part about it? She only had eyes for me.

“There’s my family,” she said, rushing over to the rim of the tub where she grabbed my face and planted a deeply passionate kiss on it.

I surrendered to that kiss for what felt like several minutes. In reality, only a few seconds had passed until she let go and her eyes popped open again.

“I missed you,” she said breathlessly.

“I missed you too. How was your day?”

“Lucrative!” she answered, grinning from ear to ear. “Wait until you hear all about this!”

“Umm, hello!” interrupted Kennedi, waving her arms. “You do have friends, you know. We didn’t just disappear because you got a boyfriend.”

Paulina giggled. “Oops. Sorry. I didn’t mean to leave you both out.”

Kennedi relented quickly. “It’s okay. I get that way when he kisses me too.”

“So what’s this really good news you have to share?” asked Sadie. “Lucrative sounds rather promising!”

Paulina clapped her hands together excitedly. She had to adjust the maid’s bonnet she wore, and it only made her look sexier.

As often as I saw them in their maid outfits, I still couldn’t get over how much of a turn-on it was to see them prance around in them. At times it made me think I’d died and gone to heaven.

And that’s when I remembered that the truth wasn’t that far off.

“Guess who called me on my way home?” asked Paulina. “Take a wild guess!”

“A dragon with eight legs and no wings?” suggested Kennedi. “And a drinking problem? But you know, he doesn’t want to admit it, and according to him, alcohol isn’t as bad as some of the harder stuff out there.”

Paulina blinked. “What?”

“What? You said take a wild guess. That’s about as wild as I can get,” replied Kennedi.

“I bet you Kevin would beg to differ,” joked Sadie.

“No, it was Mrs. Pennington!” continued Paulina. “And guess who talked a few more of her friends into using us! We now have tri-weekly contracts on four more penthouses! Isn’t that great?”

If Paulina was expecting a great celebration or emotional fanfare, she didn’t get it. When I glanced at Kennedi and Sadie, they looked lukewarm at best at hearing the news.

“In my head, I pictured this going a lot differently,” admitted Paulina, when she noticed the lack of response to her announcement.

“No, that’s great news,” said Sadie finally, shaking her head. “Y’all have done such a great job getting work for me, so I appreciate it. Really, I do.”

“I feel like there’s a but coming in all of this,” said Paulina.

Sadie winced, but thankfully, Kennedi never had a problem with speaking bluntly.

“That’s a lot of work for just three people,” said the purple-haired vixen. “Don’t you think we’re getting stretched a little thin?”

“It’s totally doable,” replied Paulina, putting her hands in the air. “I promise you, I won’t give you more than you can handle.”

“It’s just that we don’t have a lot of downtime anymore,” said Kennedi. “Especially not since we landed the Beauman Hotel.”

Kennedi had a point. It had been just over a month since we won that contract. Those twenty penthouses kept our team paid very well, and it generated just enough work that three maids could handle it without too many issues.

The problem became our other commitments. Ever since we’d reconciled with Mrs. Pennington, she kept throwing referrals our way. Our new website was attracting more attention than ever before, and we were in danger of overstretching ourselves.

“You don’t think I should turn this down, do you?” asked Paulina in a quiet tone. “I just don’t know what would happen if we did. Mrs. Pennington has been great to us, but I know how she gets when she’s mad. I don’t want the well to run dry.”

“No, it’s fine,” said Kennedi, tapping the other woman’s hand with her own. “We’ll make it work. And if it’s not fine, then we’ll have to think about hiring more help. It’s a good problem to have, right?”

Paulina clapped her hands together. “You won’t regret this! I’m going to call Mrs. Pennington back and tell her we’re all in! We’re going to have more business than we know what to do with!”

She didn’t wait for a response. She gave me a peck on the lips before disappearing back downstairs.

“That’s kinda what I’m worried about,” admitted Sadie. “Paulina knows we still need to eat and sleep, right? I don’t want to be working around the clock.”

“Don’t forget hot tub time too,” added Kennedi. “And gaming time. That girl would work all hours of the day if she could.”

“Should I say something to her?” I asked. “I don’t want you two to feel like you don’t have a voice. Or that she’s taking on too much?”

“Nah, don’t worry about—” said Sadie, before being interrupted by Kennedi.

“Would you be a dear and do that?”

I chuckled as Sadie glanced at Kennedi.

“What?” asked Kennedi. “He offered and so I accepted! Besides, I thought that’s what the Chief Handsome Officer did?”

“I must have missed that part in his job description,” replied Sadie.

“It’s right under the part about keeping all of his goblin girlfriends extremely sexually satisfied,” said Kennedi, giving me a sultry look. “And that’s one area he does incredibly well.”

“I’ll talk with Paulina,” I said, still laughing. “And in the meantime, tell me what you think about the new contracts. If you feel like it’s adding more work than you can handle, I want to know about it.”

Kennedi grabbed her sunglasses and put them on. “Don’t you worry. If I’m not happy, you’ll know it.”

“Yeah, that’s kinda what I’m afraid of,” I grumbled.

Chapter Two

I WAITED until that night to talk with Paulina one-on-one.

I wanted her to still be excited about getting us more work, but I also wanted her to consider the other girls. We didn't need to get rich by working ourselves to the bone doing this work.

As far as I was concerned, just etching out a comfortable living was more than adequate for the kind of life I was seeking, and I knew the other girls felt the same way.

Paulina was in the living room when I found her, which wasn't that surprising. It was Monday night after all, and that meant a new episode of our favorite show, *Sleeping With Da Fishes*.

While everyone here received all the more recent shows from Earth, I found that goblin television was every bit as good as what humans could make. Okay, it might have been slightly hokey, as evidenced by the title, but goblins just knew how to put on a good mafia show.

"Eh, Tony, you're a-late for our a-meeting," joked Paulina, doing her best deep Italian accent as she patted the seat next to her. By this point she'd changed out of her maid outfit and was only wearing a tiny pair of black shorts and a hot-pink camisole. She looked delectable, and I wanted to eat her like she was one of ma's homemade cannolis.

I put both hands up. "Don't shoot, Johnny. You know I had that thing tonight."

Paulina cocked her hands in the form of a gun. "Don't matter. You're gonna be sleeping with da fishes by the time I'm done with you."

It never really got old. It was a side of Paulina that I had to work hard to see. When I first met her, she was very guarded and used to working for every crumb she ever ate. It took me a while to break down her defenses, but once I did, I received this really fun version of Paulina in return.

I sat down on the couch with her, putting those smooth and shiny legs in my lap.

“Where are Sadie and Kennedi?” she asked as she danced her fingers across my arm.

“Upstairs in Kennedi’s bedroom,” I answered. “I heard something that sounded like old war music and shooting, so I’m guessing they’re gaming.”

Paulina snuggled closer. “Perfect. A night together just you and me. Just what I wanted.”

It was as close to heaven as I was going to get. We watched the show until it was over, at which point she shifted toward me and started rubbing my thigh.

“Can I tell you something?”

“Anything. What’s on your mind?”

She sighed happily. “I love my life. Did you know that?”

“Really?” I asked, chuckling. “It’s not hard to tell.”

“Am I that easy to read?”

“Mostly, but only because I know you.”

She slipped her hands under my shirt, rubbing my bare chest. Her hand was so warm, and she was turning me on with this casual rubdown.

“I just feel like we’re in a really good place,” she said. “Everything is coming together so nicely. The business is growing by leaps and bounds. We have the perfect living situation. Money hasn’t been tight. And then there’s you.”

“You mean you’re not wanting to kick me out?” I teased. “You’re still my guardian?”

Paulina giggled. “I mean, maybe officially. But you’re so much more than just a guardian to me.”

“I know, I’m your CHO, remember? Chief Handsome Officer.”

Paulina shook her head. “More than that too. Yes, you were a great addition to the business, but you’re so much more than that. I hate to think

about what my life would have been like if you never came into it. I'm sure the other girls can say the same too."

"Maybe not nearly as many contracts," I joked.

Paulina gave me a look that told me she was being serious.

"I completely agree with you. And believe me, it goes both ways," I said, taking her hand. "I love you, Paulina."

I could practically see her melting in front of me. "I love you too, Kevin. So so *so* much."

"I'm glad you think everything's coming together too," I continued, seeing an opportunity. "But I want to make sure that we keep the good times rolling, okay?"

A confused look appeared on her face. "What do you mean by that?"

"I just don't want us to take on more than we can swallow. Especially when it comes to work. If we need to hire more girls, that's one thing, but I don't want you all to work yourselves to the bone just because we're awash in contracts."

"Oh, that," said Paulina, blowing a raspberry. "We'll get through that. It won't be any problem."

"I'm sure we'll get through it, but I also don't want to make any unnecessary waves," I said. "And I can tell the girls are already feeling a little pinched."

She raised an eyebrow. "You really think so?"

I nodded without saying a word.

"Okay, I'll keep an eye on it," she said, snuggling closer. "It should still be doable though. At least these new ones."

"As long as you're not opposed to bringing on anyone new to help with the additional work?"

Paulina giggled. "I don't know. I still think you'd be cute in a maid outfit if you wanted to give it a try."

“I’ll pass on that,” I said quickly. “But I’m sure there are others that would jump at the chance.”

“I’ll make ‘em an offer they can’t refuse,” said Paulina, in her thick accent again.

I chuckled. “Exactly.”

“Okay,” said Paulina, exhaling loudly. “I’ll think about it. Now what do you say we fuggedaboutit?”

She never expected the pillow that got launched in her direction.

The next afternoon, I was curious how the new work was going. I was on the rooftop terrace checking the chemicals in the hot tub, but I knew the girls would be home from their shifts soon. I only had to put in some pH, and while I was waiting for it to cycle through, I saw three exhausted goblin beauties arrive, their shoulders slumped forward in defeat.

“Rough day?” I asked, already knowing the answer.

They just groaned in response. Even their maid outfits were a little dirty. Sadie’s had a stain on it that looked to be spaghetti sauce, and Kennedi had clearly been somewhere that was pretty dusty.

“I’m too exhausted to even flirt with you,” said Kennedi, laying out on a lounge chair like she’d just been laid out.

“I take it the new contracts were a bit harder than expected?” I asked.

Sadie and Paulina both nodded their heads. Kennedi flashed me a half-hearted thumbs-down that told me all I needed to know.

“Is it too late to back out of one of them?” I asked. “At least until we can get some help?”

Paulina winced. “I’m not sure we’ll be able to do that. But at least it’s only three days a week. We might be able to hire someone in the short term to pick up our slack before it wears us all down.”

To my surprise, Sadie just hugged Paulina, making her laugh.

“Thank you,” said Sadie. “I don’t want to die holding a broom.”

“Yeah. What Sadie said,” added Kennedi, waving her hand. “Can someone get me a drink? Hard liquor or something?”

“You’re probably dehydrated,” I said, chuckling. “You should have water instead of liquor.”

“Someone just get me some vodka as soon as possible,” said the purple-haired goblin.

I fixed up some non-alcoholic drinks for the girls as they tried to wind down from the day. We all joined Kennedi on the lounge chairs, enjoying the bright sunshine of the late afternoon.

“So what made it so bad?” I asked, once the girls had recovered some of their grit. “Were the new places more work than expected?”

Kennedi groaned. “The place that I stopped at today hadn’t been touched in years. Years, Kevin! There was dust everywhere! Speaking of which, can I jump in the hot tub? I need to get some of this off me.”

“Be my guest,” I said, gesturing toward it.

Kennedi didn’t waste any time. She pushed herself up and started to work her pantyhose down those long, delicate, green legs. Her skirt went next, followed by a tiny, black thong. I swallowed hard when I saw her pussy come into view. Even though I was intimately familiar with every inch of her, I was still mesmerized by her body.

When she lost her top and got fully nude, she dropped into the hot tub and let out the loudest moan.

“I’ll have what she’s having,” said Sadie, rubbing her eyes.

“You guys have to come in here,” said Kennedi. “The jets feel *so* good.”

“Maybe later,” said Sadie, turning her attention back to me. “At least Kennedi’s place was just dirty. Mine was flat-out messy. I don’t know how this fairy lives, but after seeing their penthouse, I don’t even want to meet them. I mean how do you get pasta sauce in a toaster, seriously?”

“Mmm, spaghetti roll-ups,” said Kennedi as her eyes rolled back. “I haven’t had those in ages.”

“Well, maybe we should switch places then and you can hang out with my fairy,” grumbled Sadie.

“What about you, Paulina?” I asked. “How was your day?”

“Eh, it could have been better,” she said. “I didn’t have anyone new today, but I still needed to cover the penthouses that these two usually do, on top of my existing work. And you know, all of you are right. We need more help.”

“Hallelujah,” called out Kennedi.

“The biggest test now will be finding the right people,” said Paulina, who gave a wary glance at Kennedi. “Kennedi and I have had a bad experience with hiring the wrong person before.”

“Yeah, do you remember, Phoebe?” asked Kennedi, before sticking out her tongue and pointing her finger at her mouth. “God, she was awful. She’s the only maid I ever met that could leave a place dirtier than how she found it. Not to mention, she smelled funny. Like old lady perfume mixed with broken dreams.”

Paulina shivered. “Yeah, she wasn’t a great fit. A bad maid can tank our business faster than not having any contracts. So we’ll have to be careful.”

“We can put an ad out,” I suggested. “Something on the forum?”

“No, that’s not allowed,” said Paulina. “Other businesses are on there, and they’ll consider it poaching. They have weird rules. We’ll have to run this one outside the forum.”

“You know, I have a friend that might be looking for work,” said Sadie, who got very excited suddenly. “Someone that used to work with me at the hot tub store. She left a few months ago but the last thing I heard about her was that she was still looking for a good job. Although, there is one small question there . . .”

“What would that be?” I asked.

Sadie winced. “Does she have to be a goblin girl?”

Paulina glanced at me, holding eye contact for several seconds. We both shrugged as our attention turned back toward Sadie.

“I’m not opposed to opening it up to anyone else,” said Paulina. “As long as she’s qualified.”

“Oh, she’s just great,” said Sadie. “You’re going to love her!”

“I might know someone too,” added Kennedi. “Someone that can help us.”

“What if we do this?” suggested Paulina. “There’s enough work to go around that we could really use a few more girls. You two already know one girl apiece, and I think I know someone that we could ask too. Why don’t we set up an interview this weekend for all three of them? We’ll see who fits in well, and we’ll hire the best.”

“What if all three of them are good?” I asked.

“Then we’ll simply hire all of them,” replied Paulina.

“I’m good with any solution that doesn’t see me coming home covered in pasta sauce every day,” said Sadie.

“Personally, I think it’s a good look on you,” quipped Kennedi. “Besides, it goes with your hair!”

Chapter Three

I WISH I could have said that week flew by, but it didn't. It turned out to be one of the longer weeks that I experienced since being reborn, and that was entirely due to the girl's workload.

Almost every night they arrived home exhausted, not wanting to do anything else but veg out. Paulina barely even touched her computer, and even Kennedi had no time for gaming.

On Thursday night, I even spent the night alone in my own bed. Which wouldn't have been a thing back on Earth, but had only happened one other time since living in the duplex.

By the time that Saturday arrived, I was more than looking forward to these interviews that would take place later today. So much so that I had to get more details from Paulina as we left the duplex that morning.

"So just to get this straight, we're going to the park to have tryouts?" I asked. "Why not have them at the duplex?"

"Because it's a beautiful day out and I wanted to prance around in this cute outfit," said Kennedi, answering for Paulina. "Why else?"

I had to admit that Kennedi looked far more than just cute. She was wearing one of those button-down shirts that wasn't buttoned all the way and tied around the middle, exposing her stomach. It was paired with a tiny pair of jean shorts that made her ass look positively squeezable.

"That's not the reason," said Paulina quickly. "Well, the outfit bit. I did want to get outside and enjoy the weather while it lasted. Plus I didn't want just anyone showing up to our house, you know?"

"No maid stalkers that know where we live if they don't get the job," added Sadie.

"Okay, I get that," I said. "Hopefully we get some good people today."

"Y'all are going to just love mine to pieces!" gushed Sadie. "She's such a sweet girl, and she has an amazing work ethic. She's going to make a great maid!"

“Wait until you see mine,” said Paulina, being more competitive with it than I expected. “Mine’s been in the business for many years. She’s one of the most experienced girls out there. She’ll mop the floor with your girl. Literally!”

“What about you, Kennedi?” I asked. “How do you feel about your girl?”

In true Kennedi fashion, she answered the only way she knew how.

“Don’t worry, she’s bitchin’,” replied Kennedi.

That was all I needed to know. The four of us made our way to the nearby park, which was situated about ten minutes from our duplex. The park was a lush green space that was dominated by a river that ran right through the middle, separating it into two distinct halves.

It was pretty hopping because the weather was so nice, but it wasn’t so crowded that our designated meeting spot was already taken by someone else.

“Oh, perfect! We’re the first ones here,” said Paulina as she stepped into a small gazebo that would serve as our base of operations. She grabbed a large banner and unfolded it, draping it off the side. In bold letters, I could see the words “Goblin Girl Maid Service tryouts” across the full length of the banner.

“So how is this going to work exactly?” asked Sadie. “We all have our preferred candidate and no limit to the amount of girls we can hire. Do we have to reach some kind of consensus about what passing looks like? Or something else?”

Paulina didn’t have to think long about it. I could tell she’d spent considerable time coming up with this already.

“So it’s not really a *try*out as much as it is a don’t-screw-up-out,” explained Paulina. “All of our girls already have someone vouching for them, so unless something sticks out as a major red flag, I have a feeling we’ll take all three. I’m calling it a tryout because I want all the new girls to take it seriously and show us their A-game. But behind the scenes, you all know the real score. Sound fair?”

“Exactly the kind of brainy plan I would expect from you,” I told Paulina, wrapping my arm around her waist. My fingers drifted over the light fabric of her thin, floral sundress.

“You sure we can’t have more fun with them?” whined Kennedi. “I was thinking of some kind of battle royale. You know, three maids enter, only one maid exits. We’ll sharpen the edges of a few brooms and let them have at it. See who really wants the job!”

Paulina’s mouth fell open. “Kennedi! What’s gotten into you?”

Sadie quickly snatched Kennedi’s arm. “Sorry, this is my fault. I introduced her to war gaming. She’s become positively bloodthirsty lately.”

“We must all do our duty for the motherland,” said Kennedi quickly.

I couldn’t hold back my laughter any longer, and I was soon joined by the other girls. These were the moments that I liked best—when we could talk about everything and nothing at the same time and still have fun.

Still, we had a job to do. And it was Paulina that spotted the first arrival of the day.

“There she is! Over here, Bridgette!”

I craned my neck to search the nearby park, not stopping until I saw the first hint of green walking in our general direction. You might think I’d be used to spending all my time around stunningly gorgeous goblin girls by this point, but nothing could have prepared me for seeing Bridgette for the first time.

The first thing I noticed was her height. Goblin girls tended to be on the shorter side, usually only coming up to my chin. Bridgette was clearly a very tall girl and once she entered the gazebo, I could see that she was nearly as tall as I was.

Calling her a girl didn’t seem quite right either. While the other girls seemed to be around the same early-twenties age as me, Bridgette seemed a bit more mature. I pegged her for being close to thirty, but her age definitely didn’t work to her detriment.

It was the total opposite in fact.

Bridgette was smoking *hot*. I almost didn't know where to look first. A natural blonde, she wore her hair straight and over her left shoulder, coming down just past her collarbone. Her eyes were bright blue, the kind that were noticeable even from a distance away. She had this little button nose that was paired with thin lips that seemed to almost be permanently set into a seductive smirk.

And it wasn't hard to see why. Everything about her just screamed sex. If I could have picked one word to describe her body, that word would be *tight*. Everything about her just seemed to work, from the way her smaller breasts strained her top, creating just the right amount of cleavage to make me salivate. Bridgette had obviously come from the gym, as she was wearing a pair of black yoga pants and a tight light-blue sports bra. The yoga pants stretched over miles of bountiful flesh, and it was tight enough to leave almost nothing to the imagination.

There was a clear difference between her and the other girls. Paulina and Sadie and even Kennedi were incredibly beautiful, but they were the kind that had to be told they were beautiful. Mostly because they didn't believe so otherwise.

I didn't get that impression with Bridgette. She knew she was hot, as evidenced by that tiny, knowing smirk on her face. And it affected me right from the start, as I started to grow hard as soon as those blue eyes fell on me.

I was almost thankful when Paulina hugged her, if only because it snapped me out of my trance and allowed me to put my tongue back in my mouth.

Real smooth.

"Everyone, this is Bridgette!" announced Paulina, holding her friend's hand in the air like she'd just won a medal. "I've known her for years as a very experienced maid that actually does great work. She's very capable, and I thought she'd be an excellent addition to our company!"

Bridgette went around doing personal introductions to the other girls before she reached me. From the moment those blue eyes settled on me and her lips parted into that knowing smirk, I felt myself get even harder.

“Paulina, you’ve been holding out on me,” said Bridgette, her voice rich with amusement. “Since when did you find a human man to call your own?”

Paulina grinned with pride. “Since a couple months ago. Kevin is a rebornie, and he’s mostly the reason behind our new success. I couldn’t do a thing without him!”

“She exaggerates a lot,” I joked, reaching over to shake hands with Bridgette. As soon as her skin touched mine, I felt a shock go through it.

Or did I just imagine that?

“Paulina would have been set without me,” I continued. “She runs a tight ship, and she’s incredibly talented.”

“She’s very lucky to have you too,” added Bridgette, eyeing me like I was some kind of premium steak. “You are lovers, aren’t you?”

I turned red immediately, not expecting that to be her next question to me. “Well, you see, that’s uh . . .”

“Oh, Kevin is our duplex bicycle,” said Kennedi nonchalantly. “We all take turns getting rides on him.”

Sadie snickered. “Kennedi, you’re so crude.”

Kennedi shrugged. “It’s true, isn’t it?”

I saw a hint of dark green on Paulina’s cheeks. “Yes, we are all in a relationship together. Kevin is amazing, and I think you’ll see exactly what I’m talking about once you get to know him more.”

A throaty giggle erupted from Bridgette’s mouth. I gulped hard as I pictured all the other things that could go into her mouth.

Focus, damnit. This is a tryout for the business, not for expanding your harem!

That turned out to be harder than I expected. For the next ten minutes, the girls took turns asking Bridgette questions about her life. I could barely focus on her answers, mostly because I felt like her eyes were always on me. It was like we were both in on the same private joke that no one else knew.

It was an attraction that was deeply intimate and very sudden all at the same time.

When it came to be my turn to ask a question, I stumbled through it while mincing my words.

“So, ah, Bridgette, how did you get to be in the maid business? I mean, how did you decide to become a maid? Or why be a maid?” I asked, hating how each sentence sounded when it came out.

Bridgette’s smirk only grew as she watched me struggle to ask the question. She seemed amused by my lack of tact.

“There’s a very long answer to that question,” she said, shifting her body so that she was leaning forward ever so slightly. It gave me a wonderful view down the front of her sports bra, and once again I had to struggle to keep my attention.

“Basically, it’s a lot better than my last job,” continued Bridgette. “That’s the short answer.”

“We have time for the long answer,” I replied. “And what was your last job?”

Her smile grew larger. “I believe the polite term is exotic dancer.”

My eyes went a little wider. “You mean that you used to be a stripper?”

“Nice,” said Kennedi, grinning from ear to ear. “Do you still have all your moves?”

Bridgette giggled. “A stripper never loses her moves. I can teach you anything you want to know as long as you have a pole.”

Kennedi whipped around to stare at Paulina. “Pretty please? Can we add a pole to my room?”

“You can do whatever you like as long as it’s with your money,” replied Paulina, before turning her attention back to Bridgette. “I didn’t know that about you. How come I didn’t know that?”

Bridgette rubbed her arm, which again, made her cleavage the center of attention. For a woman with the smallest breasts in my present company, she certainly knew how to make them the star.

“It’s not something I like to advertise,” said Bridgette. “I fell on some hard times for a while, and I had a friend of mine talk me into trying out at her club. I did it for a few years and really liked how it made me feel. Like I was some kind of goddess that just commanded attention from men.”

There was no surprise hearing that. She still was as far as my opinion was concerned.

“Anyway, I decided that I’d done it for long enough, and when new ownership came in that I didn’t care for, I quit. I wanted to do something that kept my clothes on for a change, but the maid outfits are definitely a good compromise.”

“Aren’t they though?” agreed Kennedi, as she put her hand on my thigh. “I just love to tease Kevin when I’m in mine. You should see the face he makes when he gets hard.”

“I’m sure that would be quite . . . interesting,” said Bridgette, once again staring at me with that seductive gaze. “Anyway, I bounced around a couple different maid service places but nothing that really fit just right, especially the last place. But when Paulina called me, I knew I found the right one. Sometimes it takes a lot of messing around until you find the one worth waiting for.”

For some reason, the weight of her gaze seemed to be centered on me. I didn’t know whether to be embarrassed or to invite Bridgette back to our duplex to experience it firsthand. One thing was for certain—I was going to have to get used to being permanently hard when Bridgette was around.

Chapter Four

Bridgette stayed with us for the next fifteen minutes as we continued to ask questions, just getting to know her. I might have been mesmerized by her beauty, but I found that Bridgette was surprisingly well-rounded, and she seemed like she would be a great fit for our team.

When it came time to say goodbye, Paulina let her know how this would proceed from here.

“So, I think it goes without saying that we’d all like to move forward with this,” Paulina told her. “I think the next step we go to is training, but I know that you’ll be an exception to this rule because you’re mostly trained already, so it will be more of a formality than anything.”

“I don’t have any problems with that,” replied Bridgette. “I think it makes sense that you see what I can do before you make your final decision. Are you expecting to hire anyone else?”

“We have enough work that we’ll probably need to,” replied Sadie. “So I suspect you won’t be alone in going through training.”

Bridgette’s eyes locked on me. “Then I guess I’ll just expect to make a few more new friends then.”

Fuck me, why did her eyes have to sparkle when she said that? Was there anything about Bridgette that wasn’t a total turn-on?

In the end, I was almost relieved when she left. It was getting painful to sit there with a hard-on and not be able to do anything about it. At least Sadie seemed to realize the problem that had been created when her hand inadvertently landed on my lap.

“Good golly, is that for me?” she asked, squeezing me through my shorts. “What’s got you so turned on, Kevin?”

Kennedi answered for me. “I think I know. One look at Bridgette had me over here drenching my panties. That woman is just so . . . hot!”

“Are you attracted to Bridgette, Kevin?” asked Paulina, in a more serious tone.

I knew I shouldn’t feel guilty about giving her an honest answer. I mean, we were all in a relationship together. None of the girls showed anything even slightly resembling jealousy. But I still felt a little embarrassed when I said yes.

That was when I received another reminder of just how amazing this city really was.

“Yeah, I think she’s pretty too,” admitted Paulina, after hearing my answer.

“And I think she would look pretty sexy riding this thing,” added Sadie, slowly stroking me under my shorts.

“You might want to stop on that,” I warned her. “Unless you want me to cum in public.”

She made a show of cranking up the speed, but ultimately Sadie stopped and winked at me, which was a subtle promise of what would come later.

I’m glad she stopped because we still had a job to do. Our banner was also starting to attract attention too, and we started getting a small stream of girls that stopped by to ask questions about the job. Only a couple of them seemed like they would be a good fit, but it wasn’t until a dark-skinned woman with silver hair stopped by that someone really got my attention.

I also noticed there was a very distinct smell to her. One that wasn’t unpleasant, but it reminded me of something I’d smelled before.

“Hey, is this, like, where the tryouts are for maid service?” she asked.

I’d barely opened my mouth to answer when I heard Kennedi shriek behind me.

“Nikki! You made it!”

I watched as the two women embraced and then finally separated, letting me have my first true appreciation of our newcomer. She was of average height and build, but now that she was closer I could tell that she was an elf, specifically a dark elf because of her complexion. She had smooth, unblemished skin and eyes that were colored a deep, dark red.

Her voice was more gravelly than I expected to hear from an elf, but I had a suspicion that it was due to some kind of chemical substance that she’d

taken before arriving here. She was wearing a dark shirt that had some kind of band logo across the front, one that I didn't recognize. That loose-fitting shirt was paired with some skinny jeans and high-ankle shoes to complete the look.

Back on Earth, we would have called her a goth or an emo or maybe just a loser for the sake of brevity. One thing was for certain—Nikki didn't strike me with the same air of confidence that Bridgette had.

"Everyone, this is Nikki," introduced Kennedi. "You might recognize her voice. Nikki works at Three Elves Pizza, which is where we get our favorite elven pies from. I've known her for years, and she mentioned she was getting tired of working at the pizza joint, so I told her to come down and try out for this job."

"Yeah, I'd like to not be covered in pizza sauce for once," replied Nikki, something I found completely ironic after one glance at Sadie. "And this is better than being homeless, I guess."

"Well, that still might be the case. I mean the pizza sauce thing," said Paulina, who gave a frantic look at Kennedi, one that said just-who-did-you-bring-to-this?

That look went right over Kennedi's head, who still appeared very excited to introduce her friend to us.

"So do you have any experience being a maid, Nikki?" I asked her.

Nikki shrugged. "I mean, I clean up the pizza shop most nights. Run the broom around the floor. We mop every Sunday night too. It's kinda the same thing as being a maid."

I heard Paulina cough awkwardly. "Well, it can get a little more complicated than that. We do more than just run a broom, you know? Dusting, mopping, sweeping, dishes, windows—there's no shortage of tasks sometimes. Did you do any of that stuff?"

Nikki raised her finger, getting all excited. "Well, I did pink mushrooms with our dishwasher once. So I know what needs to be done basically."

The situation was almost comical. I think Kennedi realized that the rest of us weren't that pleased by Nikki's answers so far, as she quickly went into

damage control.

“I think what Nikki is meaning to say is that she’s been around a lot of different scenarios, and she’s eager to learn,” said Kennedi. “Right, Nikki?”

Nikki hiccuped and covered her mouth. “Erm, right. Yeah, that.”

“Well, we’ll just have to let you know,” said Paulina, gesturing to the gazebo's entrance. “I’ll have Kennedi reach out if we’re interested.”

Before anything else could happen, Kennedi grabbed both me and Paulina by the arm and marched us a short distance away.

“You’re not going to hire her?” asked Kennedi, her heart in her eyes.

“You honestly think I should?” replied Paulina. “She doesn’t seem like she wants to be here. She doesn’t have any experience. And she reeks of pink mushrooms!”

“She has a concentration problem,” explained Kennedi. “The mushrooms help her focus.”

Paulina’s mouth dropped open. “*That’s* her focusing?”

“Okay, so she’s a little rough around the edges,” said Kennedi. “I wasn’t perfect either when we started, but you taught me to be the best. I think Nikki is trainable too.”

“She would probably need a lot of work,” I said. “Especially compared to someone like Bridgette, who would be a good fit almost from the start. I just don’t know about this, Kennedi. I don’t think she’s what we’re looking for.”

Kennedi sighed and closed her eyes. “Listen, I was going to let Nikki tell you on her own terms, but I think the situation warrants telling you now. She’s about to get evicted. The pizza shop doesn’t give her enough hours, and she’s having trouble making rent. She’s already got one notice, and she’s afraid she’s just going to get kicked out if she misses again. She’s in a bad spot and really needs a helping hand.”

Paulina winced. “I get that, I really do. It wasn’t that long ago that I felt like we were in the same boat, Ken. But I’m worried that she doesn’t have

what it takes. What if she tried to work in another pizza shop or something?"

"She's tried three other places, but no one will give her a job," explained Kennedi. "We're kinda her last hope."

I looked at Paulina only to find her eyes already on me. I knew exactly what she was thinking, and I was worried about having to deliver the bad news to Kennedi.

"Please?" asked Kennedi. "I'm not above begging. She's a good person who just needs some help. I'll work with her extra to make sure that she's ready to do the job. And if she just can't cut it, then I'll be the first to say when she has to go. I just want her to get a fair shot."

I glanced over at the gazebo, if only to study Nikki from afar. She was talking with Sadie about something that I couldn't hear. I caught her smiling a few times, something that really made her look a lot less like the stoner first impression that I received.

I found myself melting because of it.

"Dragonmont City is the place for second chances," I said finally. "I'm living proof of that. If Paulina is willing, I'll give her a chance. She has to meet our standards though. If she fails to meet them, then we'll cut her."

Kennedi stopped hopping up and down. A beaming smile appeared and she practically leapt into my arms.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you! Oh, you make me so happy, Kevin!" she said excitedly.

We both turned toward Paulina, who seemed to relent after I did.

"I don't want to see anyone get evicted," said Paulina. "But I'm in total agreement with Kevin. If she's not the right fit, she can't stay."

"I promise you that she'll pick up everything quickly," said Kennedi. "Give me a few weeks with her and you won't even know she hasn't been doing this forever!"

"I hope you work faster than that," grumbled Paulina.

The three of us made our way back to the gazebo, where Sadie and Nikki turned to await our decision.

“Nikki, we’d like to invite you to our boot camp training session tomorrow,” said Paulina politely. “We’ll train you on how to be a maid there. Think of it like a probationary period before you start working with us.”

“You’re serious? I’m hired?” asked Nikki, dancing on one foot.

Paulina nodded reluctantly. “We’re willing to give you a shot. But there’s a caveat! No using pink mushrooms while you’re working, okay? This is very serious, Nikki, and I won’t give any other warnings than that. I can’t have our good name sullied by someone that’s getting high while working.”

Nikki pursed her lips. “But they really help to make me focus. They aren’t bad for you at all . . . ugh, okay, I guess. If that’s what it’ll take.”

“If you can keep that under wraps, then you can join our boot camp,” I said.

“That’s totally bitchin’!” replied Nikki, thrusting her fist in the air. In the process, it made her band shirt raise over her one hip. I saw a small expanse of smooth, dark skin on her hip before it lowered.

“No more making pizzas for you!” added Kennedi, giving a high-five to her friend.

“I mean, I’d still make pizzas for you guys,” said Nikki, before leaning in really close to me. “I’d even put some pink mushrooms on there. You know, if you wanted them. I have a good hookup.”

“Eh, that’s okay,” I said. “Regular pizza is fine.”

“Totally,” replied Nikki, giving me a wink on the sly.

“Well, welcome aboard,” said Paulina, giving her a polite handshake. “We’ll see you tomorrow then? For the training?”

“Yeah, yeah, sure, sure, but one question,” said Nikki. “When do I get one of those goth maid costumes? I’m totally in love with the style.”

I’ll be honest—her question made me laugh. I wasn’t alone, because I was joined by Kennedi and Sadie, both of whom snickered.

The only person who didn’t find it funny was Paulina.

“Tomorrow, I guess?” she said. “Let’s just get through the training boot camp and we’ll talk about it more.”

“Oh totally, that sounds awesome,” said Nikki. “You guys won’t regret this at all. It won’t be anything like my last employer, no way.”

“Do I even want to ask what happened with your last employer?” asked Paulina.

“Nothing that he didn’t deserve, trust me,” replied Nikki. “No, you guys are in good hands. I’m going to be the most bitchin’ maid you ever saw. So when do I get paid?”

Chapter Five

"I REALLY HOPE you know what you're doing," whispered Paulina, right as we waved to Nikki while she was leaving.

I shrugged. "I'll be honest—I'm kinda making it up as I go."

Paulina let out a deep sigh. "I had a feeling you were going to say that. Nikki seems nice enough, but I just don't know if she's maid quality. This job isn't for everyone."

"We don't have to hire her," I said, wrapping my arm around her lower waist. "Especially if things just aren't working out. And I know Kennedi knows that."

"She does, but once she gets her heart set on things, it can be hard to sway her," said Paulina. "I just hope her intuition is right about this. I'm just not too crazy about having a pink-mushroom-addicted elf running around the business."

"I mean, it's not that different from letting Kennedi into the business."

"This is true."

It was starting to get hot in the park right as Nikki was leaving. I was sweating now, not only from the temperature but also because I'd been around gorgeous women all day long. More than anything, I wanted one of the LPAs we had in the refrigerator, and maybe to drink it while relaxing in the a/c.

There was still one more girl to go though. And we didn't have to wait long for her arrival.

"Ah, there she is now!" said Sadie, brightening up when she saw the last girl. "She's just over there!"

I craned my head, searching for another goblin girl to arrive. I just didn't see any shades of green.

"Where is she?" I asked, still struggling to see.

"She's right there," replied Sadie, pointing her finger. "Open your eyes!"

I couldn’t see any goblins, nor could I see any dark elves like Nikki. What I did see was something that resembled a half-woman, half-horse making her way toward us.

I’d seen centaurs before, mostly right after I was reborn. I just didn’t expect to see one that looked like *her*.

The woman had long, chestnut brown hair that was both wavy and free-flowing. Strands covered half her face, requiring her to keep pulling it away from her eyes in a way that was immediately cute. She had large eyes that were almond-shaped and filled with deep-green irises. They were also covered by a thin set of glasses with black rims. She had a spattering of freckles across her nose and her cheeks, as well as a thin mouth that was posed into a nervous smile.

The rest of her was just as beautiful as her face. She was wearing one of those light tank tops that was white in color underneath, while having an open summer sweater that was green to match her eyes. Above her waist, she seemed almost like a human librarian, but once I looked lower, that’s when you really saw the differences.

Her four legs were covered in a light matte of chestnut fur to match the hair on her face. I could see a tail swishing from side to side—more out of nerves than it was out of friendliness. She was wearing this jean skirt that looked like it was made for an extremely-obese woman, but in actuality, it was just large enough to cover her larger flank while still being decidedly feminine.

I didn’t know what to think. I never really thought I could be attracted to a centaur before, but she just made it work in a way that was equal parts cute and adorable. She was part nerd and part horse, but I found that I had trouble looking away from the main package.

“Cassidy, you made it!” shrieked Sadie, rushing forward to hug her friend.

“I’m not too late, am I?” asked Cassidy nervously, as her tail swished against the metal railing of the gazebo. “I’m so sorry, I’ve never come to this park before! I think I went to the wrong part initially too.”

“You’re fine, don’t worry,” replied Sadie, right before introducing her to all of us. “Cassidy is one of my best friends. We worked at the hot tub

store for a few months together!”

“Six months to be exact,” added Cassidy, who met my eyes and smiled. I couldn’t help but smile back.

“She was such a hard worker, and we all loved her,” clarified Sadie. “I hated when she left, but she found another job that paid better.”

“Which turned out to be a dud,” said Cassidy, putting her hand against her face. “I took a chance that didn’t pan out. Live and learn, I guess.”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” said Paulina. “Why didn’t you just go back to the hot tub store?”

Cassidy started rubbing her arm. “Well, the owner there could be hard to work for.”

“Say no more, I remember that guy,” I interrupted. “He was a dick.”

That earned another shy smile from Cassidy. It was safe to say I was officially smitten by the nerdy beauty in front of me.

“It’s very nice to meet you anyway, Cassidy,” said Paulina, who still seemed to be trying to figure out how a centaur could be hired to do maid service. “Have you worked in this business before?”

“Not officially, but I did work in a retirement home, and a big portion of our responsibilities included cleaning up after our tenants,” replied Cassidy. “I had a lot of training doing that, and I feel like this is an easy equivalent to that job. As long as I don’t have to change adult diapers.”

“I don’t know about that,” said Kennedi. “We like to have some wild parties.”

I started to chuckle, but I could tell that Cassidy didn’t get the joke immediately. She looked frightened for a moment until she figured out that Kennedi was messing with her.

“Sorry, I’m not the best with social cues at times,” admitted Cassidy. “My mom always said that I just needed a job where I could work by myself and not have to deal with people. That sounds terrible to say out loud, but social situations make me anxious. That’s another reason why I’d like to try being a maid. Just let me work and I’ll get the job done.”

“She exaggerates a little,” said Sadie. “She’s very good with customers. Can’t even tell she’s nervous.”

Cassidy let out an awkward laugh, telling me that she didn’t totally agree with Sadie’s opinion. Still, she reminded me of someone I used to know a long time ago, back in my first life.

When I was still in high school, I remembered this bookworm girl named Violet that always seemed to be having a hard time. Like Cassidy, Violet had the same nerdy look and social anxiety which prevented her from making friends easily. I also wasn’t her friend, until one time when we were assigned to work in the same science group and I actually got to know her.

And that was when I found out just how cool Violet could be. Once you broke down that anxious outer shell, she was just downright likeable and sweet. We even stayed friends throughout the rest of high school and even college because of it.

I could see a lot of Violet in Cassidy. And it made me like her almost from the start.

Once we got her talking, Cassidy seemed to open up more to us, which was nice. Her family lived on the outskirts of the city, but she didn’t seem very close to them. I asked her if she knew Richie, who was the centaur that welcomed me to Dragonmont City, but she didn’t. By the sounds of things, the centaur community was large enough that it really wasn’t that close.

Frankly, I was more than willing to give her a shot, but I could tell Paulina was struggling with her a little. And it wasn’t hard to see why.

“I’m just trying to figure out how this is going to work,” said Paulina, who was trying to pick the right words. “It’s just our business has been usually goblin girls. I’ve seen elves and dwarves do this job too, but mostly because they’re already, you know, humanoid. I just don’t know how a centaur would work because you’re larger than us.”

I watched as Cassidy’s head tilted forward in defeat. “No, it’s okay. I understand. I kinda thought it was going to be a long shot too.”

Paulina waved her hands. “No, no, no, I’m not rejecting you. I just want to . . . ugh, how do I say this without sounding like a bitch?”

“I got you, Polly,” said Kennedi as she turned toward Cassidy. “What my super nice best friend is trying to say is can you be graceful while you're cleaning and not destroy a bunch of shit with your hooves and big ass?”

I saw Cassidy flush a dark red color. “I t-think so. I mean, I’m not that clumsy if that’s what you’re getting at?”

“That’s exactly what Polly is trying to figure out,” explained Kennedi. “Because we can’t have a maid that is cleaning up in the front while her legs kick out in the back and cause a side table to get knocked over, you know? It defeats the purpose of having a maid if you’re creating more work as you move throughout an apartment.”

“I can vouch for Cassidy in that department,” added Sadie. “When we worked at the store, I thought Cassidy was an amazing employee. She never dropped anything, and she always stocked the chemicals in a way that was pretty. No one’s perfect, but Cassidy is seriously great. At least, that was my opinion.”

Cassidy looked secretly pleased to hear that. “You really thought so? Gosh, thanks so much, Sadie!”

Sadie grinned and hugged her friend.

“Centaurs are very good workers and we’re quick learners too,” said Cassidy. “I’m not going to be making more work for you, I promise.”

“Do you feel comfortable with doing all the duties that the job requires?” asked Paulina. “Like scrubbing the floors or getting into tight spaces?”

Cassidy didn’t say a word in response. Instead, she simply knelt on all four legs until her skirt was touching the ground. She grazed the wooden floor with her fingers.

“No problem whatsoever,” she said. “I’ll need to learn how to do some things in this job, but I know I can handle it physically if that’s what you’re worried about.”

“This might be a first,” said Kennedi. “I’ve never seen a centaur maid before, but I’m willing to give her a shot.”

Cassidy’s eyes brightened. “Really? You really mean that?”

“I’m with Kennedi on this one,” I added. “I’d like to see what you can do too.”

I never expected what happened next. Cassidy leapt off the ground and hugged me like it was the best news she received all year. I found myself hugging back, mostly because I wanted to see this work out just as much as she did.

She might have had some social anxiety, but she seemed capable and was definitely a sweet girl. I thought she would fit in nicely with the rest of us.

“It’s official then,” said Paulina, racking a smile as she gave Cassidy our address. “Come over tomorrow morning for boot camp. We’re going to teach you all about being a maid.”

“This is so exciting!” replied Cassidy as she let go of me and hugged Paulina next. “You’re not going to regret this!”

As Paulina started to tell Cassidy about what to expect tomorrow, Kennedi slipped in next to me. “I think we’ll be the first maid service with different fantasy races involved,” she said. “Most companies are either all goblins or dwarves or elves. Not mixed like this.”

“Maybe we could use that to our advantage?” I said. “We hire the best of the best despite the race, and we’re all the better for it?”

Kennedi giggled. “I think you’re right. And as good as someone like Nikki is at making pizza, I want to make her even better at being a maid.”

That still seemed to be a tall order to me. I had my doubts about Nikki, but I was willing to give her a chance. Bridgette and Cassidy seemed like they were going to take to this like ducks in the water.

After we waved goodbye to Cassidy, we decided to call it a day. I pulled down our banner and folded it to bring back home with us while the girls gathered the rest of our things.

“I don’t know about the rest of you, but all this hard work makes me want to relax a little,” said Kennedi as we left the gazebo behind.

“Hard work?” snickered Sadie. “Interviewing people is hard work for you?”

“Any work can be hard if you do it too much,” said Kennedi seriously, nodding her head. “But you know what I want right now?”

“What’s that?” I asked.

“A daiquiri, a zander nut cookie, and some time in the hot tub!”

Paulina giggled. “You’re in charge of the cookies. I’ll make the daiquiris.”

And just like that, our afternoon plans were set.

Chapter Six

The rest of the day unfolded just like we wanted.

We watched the sun go down from the rooftop terrace while the sweet taste of a strawberry daiquiri lingered in my mouth. There was still a tray of gooey cookies not far from the tub, and I had my arms around both Paulina and Sadie as the jets of the tub focused on my back.

Life was definitely good, and I thought it could definitely get a little better with the addition of the new girls.

They all intrigued me in some way. Bridgette was the most obvious, especially because it seemed like nothing about that girl was boring. She could make putting on shoes look sexy, and one look from her sultry eyes was enough to make me forget my own name.

The fact that she was also the only other goblin girl brought a new element to it as well. I knew what to expect from goblins, and I also knew they had an undeniable attraction to human men. That made me wonder just what the future would hold for Bridgette.

As sexy as Bridgette was, the sweet, innocent, but also anxious Cassidy also filled me with intrigue. She seemed to be the one most lacking in confidence, but she was also the one that I wanted to see succeed the most. If she did well in the boot camp, I think she would make a great maid someday.

And then there was our goth stoner Nikki. Even just thinking about that made me chuckle. I had the most doubts about her, but Kennedi seemed to think she would fit in well with us. I guess if she didn't, we could always hire her to make elvish pizzas for us.

That night, I was in the mood to just chill out a little. Paulina had already gone to sleep, and I could hear sounds of gaming from Kennedi's room, so I eventually made my way over to see what they were playing.

My amusement started almost as soon as I reached her door.

"Take my tanks, bitch! You can't handle my panzers!"

I opened the door to find both Sadie and Kennedi logged in on different computers, playing *Hearts of Iron 4*. Sadie grinned at me as soon as I entered.

“Oh, there you are, Kevin,” she said, waving me over. “Come over here and watch me curb-stomp Kennedi with my tank armies.”

Kennedi groaned. “This is so not fair. I’m running out of steel!”

“Who is playing who?” I asked, staring at the screen of a game that I was only vaguely familiar with.

“I’m the glorious Soviets fighting for the motherland,” said Sadie. There was something about her accent that made that statement just utterly adorable. “And Kennedi is playing the British trying to resist me. We bashed up Germany together and now it’s time for the ultimate showdown—Allies versus commies.”

“Okay, I give up,” said Kennedi, throwing her hands in the air. “You have way too many divisions. I can’t hope to counter all of that.”

“So you surrender to the motherland?” asked Sadie.

“Stop saying motherland! It’s weird.”

“Tell me you surrender to the motherland and I’ll stop.”

“Sadie! No!”

“Then the tank armies will continue until we’ve destroyed all elements of the bourgeoisie! Death to imperialists!”

I chuckled and glanced at Kennedi. “She takes this really seriously, doesn’t she?”

“Ugh, I’d be impressed if I wasn’t so annoyed at losing,” replied Kennedi.

“This is so much fun,” said Sadie, glowing with her win. “We need to play more war games. This is so much cooler than *Mario Kart*.”

“You’re going to have to let me get better first,” said Kennedi. “I can’t deal with losing this much. It’s just not in my psyche.”

“Kennedi, everyone loses at something eventually,” I joked.

“Not me,” she said, touching her chest. “Not when it comes to gaming. I like being the best!”

“Mrs. Likes-being-the-best is about to get her last army kicked off the continent,” said Sadie with a giggle. “In about three . . . two . . . one!”

I leaned in closer so I could watch the screen. Sadie had Kennedi’s army completely surrounded in Belgium. She was bleeding divisions and all of a sudden, the last soldier icon’s helmet popped off, signaling her defeat.

“Fuck,” grumbled Kennedi. “Okay, I’m done for tonight. No more.”

“Winner winner, pizza dinner!” gloated Sadie. “And as the winner, I’m the one that gets to make you do something tonight.”

“What’s that about?” I asked.

Kennedi rolled her eyes. “Every time I win a race or something, I make Sadie do something for me. Usually it’s getting me a new drink or bringing me a snack, something like that.”

I was definitely amused. “And now it’s coming back to bite you?”

Kennedi put her hand against the side of her head and leaned on it. “What do you want from me, Sadie?”

Sadie pretended like she was thinking it over. “Oh, I don’t know. Something that should fit the task of losing as badly as you did. But what should it be?”

She stroked her chin until suddenly Sadie had an idea.

“I got it!” she said excitedly. She hopped out of her chair and approached me, grabbing my shorts and yanking them down my legs.

“Sadie, what are you doing?” I asked, as my lower half was bare for both of them. Not that I raced to cover myself either. I’d been naked with both of them too many times to count, just never had the same time.

“Your task for being tonight’s loser is to suck Kevin’s cock,” announced Sadie while crossing her arms. “Suck him until he’s nice and hard for me.”

Upon hearing that, my cock gave a small lurch. I wasn’t expecting this, but I was also still wound up from earlier, seeing all the new girls. Even I was

surprised how quickly I became hard, even as I watched a tiny smirk appear on Kennedi's face.

"You want me to give him head?" she asked. "That's not a punishment. That's a total pleasure."

"Who said it had to be a punishment?" asked Sadie innocently.

One look at the redhead's face told me she had something up her sleeve. I was more than happy to let her get her way, especially if that meant some intimacy with two of my favorite girls.

Kennedi didn't keep me waiting for very long. She slid off her chair until her knees hit the floor, slowly crawling toward me as a dangerous look appeared in her eyes—one of arousal. Using one hand, she tossed her hair to the side, fluffing it in the process and giving her a sexy edge that only added more steel to my cock.

"I think you found the steel you were looking for," joked Sadie, pointing to my hardness.

Kennedi grinned as her hand wrapped around me. "I could have used this thirty minutes ago, Kevin. Where were you then?"

"Late to the party, I guess."

"Mmm, don't let it happen again."

I looked down into her sexy brown eyes as my cock dangled inches from her face. She seemed to relish toying with me, giving me lazy strokes followed by quick rapid ones and then going back to lazy. It wasn't until she spit on her hand and rubbed it into my shaft that I felt my heart start to race.

"Wow, that's really hot."

I glanced over to Sadie to find her still sitting in her chair, but she'd angled it so that she could watch us. Her legs were slightly spread, and I could see one hand resting between her thighs, just over her black shorts.

"It's very hot," whispered Kennedi. "Hot and throbbing in my hand. Mmm, so fucking thick too. I love this cock so much."

Her tongue darted out at that moment, teasing the tip of my cock while her eyes stayed latched on mine. A groan erupted from my lips—thick and guttural while I watched my goblin beauty continue to tease me.

“Does he taste good, Kennedi?” asked Sadie. I could tell that her voice was strained from watching us, and I thought I noticed her arm moving out of the corner of my eye.

Kennedi purred in approval and parted her lips, sliding them over the shiny tip of my shaft. She moved her head to the side while keeping her lips wrapped around me, still teasing the slit with the tip of her tongue.

When she moved past the head, a small groan escaped from my lips. I thrust my hips forward, driving more of my cock into her mouth. Next to us, I heard Sadie’s breathing intensify. I heard rustling sounds next, only to find that the gym shorts she was wearing had slid down to her knees.

That forced me to pull my eyes away from Kennedi, if only to watch Sadie strumming her pussy.

When our eyes met, Sadie’s wrist started to move even faster. She slid one hand north, her fingers trailing under her shirt but over her stomach until she could cup her breast. The moment she pinched her nipple, her hips jerked forward, allowing me to see the glistening wetness underneath.

As much as I wanted to watch her, Kennedi recaptured my attention by sliding her lips all the way down my shaft, kissing my pubic bone in the process. I was all the way in the back of her throat, tickling her tonsils, but she didn’t seem to care. If anything, it made her bolder.

She came up for air for a brief moment before sliding all the way back down again, this time holding it for several seconds while she stared up at me with those sexy eyes. I could feel my cock pulsating in her mouth, desperate for any kind of release on one hand, but also trying to hold on as long as I could.

My cause was made much more difficult when Kennedi lifted her shirt. She was wearing one of those half-shirts that seemed to always have some glorious underboob on display. I hadn’t been able to see them from this angle, but she fixed that by pulling it up over her tits, showing off those fantastic mounds. Paulina had always joked that they were magically-

enhanced, but that didn't bother me at all. They were just too magnificent to not love.

Kennedi knew how obsessed with her tits I really was, especially when she let me fall out of her mouth with an audible *plop*.

She giggled as saliva dripped from her chin down to her breast. "I know how much you love the girls. I thought maybe you missed them?"

"Fuck yes," I whispered, reaching down to cup one of them in my hand. My fingers found her nipple, gently pinching it to hardness while Kennedi moaned her approval.

"I'd let you play with my nipples all day long if we could," she said. "I love how your hands feel on me."

I'd gladly take her up on that offer. I'd stay in bed with her for days if it meant being able to try everything I wanted to do with her. All the girls in the house had this innate ability to keep me wanting more, but I guessed that just went with the territory of being a sexy goblin girl.

I aimed my cock so that it could slide right in the warm valley between Kennedi's tits. My shaft was still coated with her saliva, which helped me slide along until we needed more. At that point, Kennedi spit right between her tits, lubing me up again.

"Fuck my tits," she urged, stroking my thigh with her hand. "Fuck them. Fuck them *good*."

Kennedi angled her head so that every tip the tip thrust through that succulent flesh, it popped right into mouth. It was the best of both worlds, feeling that wetness against the tip as my cock was wrapped in a valley between her breasts.

The only way it could have gotten better was if Sadie got involved too. I craned my head to look at her, finding her face flushed and her eyes closed as she diddled her clit. Her body stiffened suddenly, the result of her first orgasm. When she came back from it, I gestured for her to join Kennedi on the floor in front of me.

The gorgeous redhead moved slowly, teasing me as she sauntered from her chair to my side, kissing me deeply as I fucked Kennedi's tits. When she

knelt against me, I could feel her hands cup my balls, slick with her own juices as she started to massage them.

“Are these full for us?” asked Sadie, battering her eyelashes at me.

I nodded, not trusting myself to speak.

Sadie let out a throaty giggle before turning her attention toward Kennedi. She pushed up on her knees and gestured for Kennedi to lean back.

“Fuck, that’s nice,” I groaned as Sadie’s mouth replaced Kennedi. I was fucking Kennedi’s tits while Sadie sucked the tip. It definitely took the award for the coolest thing I’d ever done in my life.

“Hold his cock steady, comrade,” joked Sadie at one point, when her mouth wasn’t full. “I need to make sure he does his duty for the motherland.”

Kennedi rolled her eyes, but she made sure my cock stayed nice and secure between her bountiful tits. The girls kept switching back and forth until I could see both of them playing with their clits down below.

It was time to give them some attention of their own. And I knew exactly how I wanted to do it.

I pulled each of them up one at a time. Kennedi went first, and I moved her over to the bed, making her lay down with her butt right against the edge, and her back against the center. She spread her legs, giving me a perfect view of her drenched slit that seemed to be just waiting for me.

Before I could attend to Kennedi, I needed to grab Sadie. When I pulled her closer to the bed, I could see a questioning look in Kennedi’s eyes.

“You lost the game tonight, right?” I asked. “So that means you get to do one more thing to take care of Sadie while we’re together. Sadie, I want you to go sit on her face.”

Kennedi’s eyes brightened considerably. “Oh fuck yes, this party is getting better by the minute!” The purple-haired vixen patted her shoulders. “Saddle up, Sadie.”

Sadie giggled as she crawled into bed. “I feel like a cowgirl.”

“If that’s the case, just consider Kennedi’s face your saddle,” I said while I positioned myself between Kennedi’s outstretched legs. I swiped my cock against her open slit and pushed myself inside.

“Mmm, yes!” moaned Sadie right as her pussy settled over Kennedi’s lips. “Oh my gosh, this is . . . so fucking good. Lick my pussy, Kennedi. Lick it. Like that. Uh huh. Keep going. Oh! Oh, yeah!”

I could hear Kennedi moaning against Sadie’s pussy, but I couldn’t tell if it was from licking Sadie or if it was from feeling me. I suspected me, because I didn’t waste any time in hammering her with all the pent-up horniness from earlier.

I built my tempo up quickly, moving so fast that I could hear the sounds of her skin smacking against each other as we moved. I was very used to the exquisite nature of goblin pussy by this point in my life, but it never seemed to get old with me. Every time was just like the first time—that sweet, pull-you-in feeling and never let you go. My eyes rolled to the back of my head as I pounded her pussy, letting myself go as I just surrendered to it.

Sadie was the cherry on top, literally. Fucking Kennedi was one thing but watching Sadie as Kennedi ate her pussy at the same time was a heavenly experience. Sadie kept her eyes trained on me, and I could watch every little expression that formed on her face.

“Oh, Kevin. Baby. She’s eating me so good. So fucking good. Mmm fuck,” whimpered Sadie. “So d-deep. So deep in my pussy. Can’t stop. Oh fuck, no. No, no, no. It’s so good.”

I could have listened to Sadie’s sweet moans all day long. It was making it so hard for me not to cum, especially knowing that Kennedi’s tongue was buried inside her. When Sadie came for a second time, I saw her completely let loose, drenching Kennedi’s face with the remnants of her orgasm.

If Kennedi cared, she didn’t show it. She didn’t let up, not even in the slightest. Not until Sadie was begging her to switch positions.

“I want to get fucked now,” said Sadie, lowering herself to the bed and putting her juicy ass in the air. “Bring your pussy over here, Kennedi. Let

me take care of you now.”

“I was so hoping you were going to say that,” said Kennedi, using her blanket to wipe Sadie’s juices off her chin and neck. “Show me what that tongue can do.”

As Sadie got to work on Kennedi’s pussy, I slid into Sadie. The first thrust put me all the way inside thanks to her recent orgasm. I grabbed onto her hips at that point and started pounding away, desperate to finally find an orgasm of my own.

I was done with this holding back shit. I wanted to cum, and more than anything, I wanted to paint these two lovely beauties in front of me.

“So deep!” moaned Sadie, her words muffled by Kennedi’s pussy. “Fuck me harder, Kevin!”

I was sawing in and out as fast as I could muster. Glancing down, I couldn’t help but be entranced by the sight of my cock entering her body, covered in a thin, white film of Sadie’s juices. It was utterly mesmerizing, especially as Kennedi’s moans soon provided the perfect backdrop noise for our wild coitus.

“Gonna gonna gonna cum!” she shrieked, throwing her head back and thrusting her pussy against Sadie’s mouth.

She wasn’t the only one on the brink. I felt that familiar feeling trigger deep inside me as extreme warmth coursed through my body. I only pulled out of Sadie just in time, moving toward the other side of the bed when it all came erupting out of me.

Five powerful jets of cum spurt out of my cock and onto Sadie’s face, coating her cheeks and chin. Several squirts painted Kennedi’s pussy and thighs. They ended up looking like glazed pastries by the time I was done with them, which definitely provided an interesting visual.

“Oh my god,” said Kennedi, putting her hand on her forehead once we’d caught our breath. “That was so worth losing that game. I’d do it again in a heartbeat.”

Sadie laughed as she scooped up a glob of my cum from Kennedi’s thigh. “Yeah, I’ll say. Kevin can invade me any time he wants.”

Kennedi giggled. “I feel like my pussy just got dive-bombed.”

“If that’s the case, I want dive-bombed every night,” joked Sadie.

“There’s never a boring moment with you two, is there?” I asked.

Kennedi shook her head from side to side. “Would you have it any other way?”

“Actually, no. No, I wouldn’t.”

Chapter Seven

I WASN'T sure at what point I fell asleep last night. I remembered cleaning up with Sadie and Kennedi and then falling back into bed lazily, passing out sometime after. What I didn't expect was to be woken up by the sound of a whistle.

"What the fuck is that?" asked Kennedi, bolting upright while still naked from the night before. I'd heard the whistle too, springing out of bed because of the sudden sound.

What we found in front of us was none other than Paulina. And there weren't enough words to describe how she was dressed, especially if I wanted to do her justice.

She looked like a miniature drill sergeant. She'd found some kind of army helmet that was worn over her hair, with only her goblin ears sticking out from the side. It was paired with some kind of dark-green army vest, as well as a little baton whip that she kept smacking against her other hand.

"Paulina, have you lost your mind?" grumbled Kennedi, pulling a pillow over her head.

Paulina grinned. "It's time for boot camp, ladies and hunky boyfriend. And I thought I'd have to look the part as the chief instructor."

"You look great, Paulina," I said, flashing a thumbs-up. "Though I think the baton is just a little too much."

"Oh, don't worry, it's just for show," she said, smacking it against her hand. "I'm not actually going to hit anyone with it."

"Could be kinky," said Kennedi, only to earn a swat from Sadie.

"So when do our guests arrive?" asked Sadie, who glanced over at the clock. "Holy crap, y'all! It's almost ten!"

We'd definitely overslept. It wasn't that surprising to me, mostly because having sex with two goblin girls can really take a lot of energy out of you. It meant that we would soon have visitors though, and all three of us rushed out of bed to make ourselves presentable.

By the time we dragged ourselves into the kitchen, the first girls were arriving. I was munching on a piece of toast with delicious apple-butter jelly when I opened the door to find Bridgette staring back at me.

“Good morning, Kevin,” she said, her voice already sultry despite the early hour. “I’m glad to see you again.”

I almost choked on my toast. Even just a pleasant morning greeting from Bridgette was sexy. That wasn’t even accounting for what she was wearing, which wasn’t much. Bridgette wore one of those loose white halter tops, where the edges seemed to dance across her stomach every time she moved. It was paired with a low-cut pair of jean shorts that really showed off her long legs.

I couldn’t help myself. Despite my best intentions, I still stumbled with my greeting.

“Welcome home,” I said, before coughing awkwardly. “I mean welcome to our home. Come in, come in.”

She gave me that mysteriously coy smile. “Thank you. I’m so glad to be able to see the place where you live. Especially if we’re going to be . . . *partners*.”

Now I thought I was imagining things. Why did she drag out the word “partners” like she did? Did she mean something by it?

“You’re the first to get here today, so we’re still eating breakfast,” I explained. “But Paulina is ready for your arrival, and we can’t wait to see what you can do.”

Bridgette stepped closer, invading my personal space. I could feel exactly where her chest pushed against my arm. “What about you?” she asked. “Are you excited to see what I can do too?”

I gulped hard. “Oh, yeah. Very much so.”

Her eyes fluttered and she touched my arm gently. “I’m so glad to hear that. I know I’m going to blow your mind once you see my skills.”

Every statement out of her mouth seemed to be dripping with sex. I didn’t know how I was going to handle being around Bridgette all day. I was

really hoping she was going to nail the boot camp, even if that meant living with the tension 24/7.

I brought Bridgette into the kitchen, where she exchanged greetings with the rest of the girls. No sooner had that happened than the doorbell rang again. I answered it this time to find Cassidy standing there, this time wearing a conservative light-green blouse with a floral pattern around the arms. She was wearing something that looked like tights over her bottom half, making me wonder just how she got them on in the first place.

“Hey, Cassidy, good morning!” I said, with much more tact than I managed earlier with Bridgette.

Cassidy bit her lip and looked inside. “I’m so nervous right now. I barely even managed to ring the doorbell. Ugh, I’m a complete mess.”

“Well . . . you’d never know it by looking at you,” I said, trying to turn the situation around. “By that I’m trying to say that you look really nice this morning.”

That seemed to do the trick. I watched as her anxiety melted away, only to be replaced by that shy smile that so entranced me yesterday.

“Can I ask you something?” she said. “What exactly is your role with the company? I could tell that Paulina was the owner yesterday, but you have such a calming presence about you. Are you the co-owner or something?”

“My official title is CHO if I’m being serious,” I replied, chuckling.

Cassidy looked confused. “CHO? What’s that?”

“Erm, I’m sure the other girls will tell you eventually. It’s a bit of an inside joke. Just think of me as the business advisor. I wear a lot of hats, but basically I’m here to make sure the business stays on track.”

She started to nod. “Yeah, I can see that. I get the impression that you’re like the glue that holds everything together.”

“When you have girls like Kennedi here, you definitely need a lot of glue. And sometimes duct tape.”

Cassidy giggled and her smile grew. “I have a feeling we’re going to get along just fine. Wish me luck today, okay? I think I’m really going to need it.”

“I will, but I have a feeling you won’t need it at all,” I said, gesturing inside. “Relax, you’re going to do just fine.”

No sooner had Cassidy passed me that I already started to close the door behind her. I never quite made it, especially as I heard someone yell from the gate by the sidewalk.

“Wait for me! I’m here too!”

Throwing the door open again, I watched as Nikki made her way up the sidewalk toward me. I actually had to admit that she looked more attractive today than she did yesterday. Her silverish hair was pulled up in a messy ponytail that bounced with every step she took. Her eyes were considerably less red than they were yesterday, more pinkish since I assumed she hadn’t taken any mushrooms yet. Nikki was still dressed in those tight skinny jeans and black band t-shirt though, almost like she hadn’t taken them off from yesterday.

“Wow, Kevin,” she said, as she looked at the rest of the house. “This is a totally maleficent house you have. For some reason, I didn’t picture it looking so nice.”

“Ah, good morning to you too, Nikki,” I replied, not knowing how else to react to that. “Thanks for coming.”

“Oh, I almost forgot,” said Nikki, pulling out a small box from behind her. “I brought you some leftover elvish pizza. I snagged it last night when I told them I quit. It’s pheasant with mrazberry sauce. I know it’s Kennedi’s favorite.”

She handed the box over, which confused me a little, especially since it wasn’t in a traditional pizza box. It looked like it was a shoe box more than anything.

“Um, where’s the original box?” I asked, more out of curiosity than anything.

Nikki just blinked at me. “What original box?”

“You know what, it’s not important,” I replied. “Come in. You’re just in time, and boot camp is about to begin.”

Nikki slipped past me to head inside, but not before her arm brushed against my stomach. It was the kind of contact I wouldn't have noticed otherwise, had I felt that it didn't linger just a second longer than it should have. Nikki didn't give any indication that it was done on purpose, but something inside me questioned what the intent of it was.

By the time we entered the living room, I was shocked at what I found.

"Jumping jacks!" ordered Paulina, smacking the baton against her hand. "One! Two! Three!"

In the center of the living room, I watched as Bridgette and Cassidy started following orders, doing their jumping jacks before being joined by Nikki, who hopped right into the fray. Cassidy's jumping jacks made the entire house shake because of the weight of her lower half, but she still managed to make them work.

"Okay, switching it up now," said Paulina. "Give me push-ups. Twenty of 'em! Go!"

Bridgette was the first to hit the ground, pushing up on her hands and feet until she looked as straight as blank. Well, almost straight. I couldn't help but notice how her rounded ass stuck out from the rest of her backside. Bridgette being Bridgette also caught me noticing, causing that seductive smirk to reappear on her face.

The other girls were struggling though. I don't think Nikki had ever done a push-up in her entire life. She looked more like a triangle than she did a plank with her butt raised all the way in the air, barely coming down at all as she counted out the repetitions.

Cassidy's were even worse than that, something she quickly acknowledged as she tried to get down and back up again with her hooves.

"Um, I'm not really made for push-ups," she said, raising her hand. "Is there something else I can sub these out for?"

"How about more jumping jacks?" asked Paulina, a strange gleam in her eye.

Cassidy nodded and once more the house began to shake as she started her jacks again while the other girls finished her push-ups. By that point, I was

thinking that Paulina had taken the idea of a boot camp just a little too seriously. I was having deja vu, especially when I remembered the sight of the dwarf ladies' boot camp from last month. That being in mind, I pulled Paulina to the side.

"What's with the push-ups and the workout routine?" I asked. "We didn't make Sadie do this when she joined us."

Paulina winced. "Is it a little much? Am I overdoing it?"

"Gee, General Patton, I think just a little," I joked, patting the helmet she was wearing. "Are you nervous about them getting trained properly?"

"Totally nervous," she admitted. "Especially Cassidy and Nikki. I just wanted to see their simple fitness and so far it's not looking great."

"Well, it's just some push-ups and jumping jacks, both of which are not needed to be maids. Why don't we cut back on the cardio and get them cleaning? Once you show them the ropes, we'll know more about whether they'll last long term."

Paulina nodded and removed her helmet, clearly embarrassed about the whole thing now. "You think I've lost my mind, don't you?"

"I think the helmet is adorable on you, General," I teased. "But I also don't want to scare away our three best recruits."

I kissed her, mostly just to get that frown off her face. It worked, and we returned to the living room to find the girls out of breath.

"Okay, enough cardio," said Paulina, gesturing for them to stop. "I just wanted to make sure you'd have the stamina necessary for a full day of cleaning. Believe me, you'll be surprised at just how much it takes out of you when you're constantly doing dishes, making beds, and cleaning up after sloppy fairies."

"I'm really used to strenuous physical activity, so it doesn't bother me at all," replied Bridgette, still wearing that mischievous smile. "In fact, I'd say I do my best work when I'm hot and sweaty."

Kennedi said something to me that I didn't hear at all, mostly because I was still picturing Bridgette hot and sweaty. I turned to her and asked her to repeat herself.

Kennedi giggled. “I said I kinda like her. Everything she says is dripping in innuendo. I could learn a thing or two from her. Bring my sassiness up a notch, you know?”

“You don’t need any help. You do just fine on your own.”

Kennedi pursed her lips. “I don’t know. Sadie was really good with her smack-talking last night. Maybe I’m losing my touch.”

“After what I experienced last night, I don’t think that’s possible, not even remotely,” I said.

Kennedi beamed with a smile. “That’s why I love you. You always make me feel sexy, no matter what.”

I kissed her too. “And I always will.”

By this point in the boot camp, we shifted into the next phase. Paulina brought out some maid outfits and had the girls change so they could get the authentic experience. She even had one for Cassidy, which was actually just the top of the outfit only, relying on Cassidy to wear the bottoms she already had on.

“Let’s get changed, everyone!” announced Paulina. “The first cleaning lesson starts in ten minutes!”

“Speaking of which, we need to get changed too,” Sadie said to Kennedi. “We still have a few penthouses to clean.”

Kennedi’s shoulders slumped forward. “I’ll be so happy once these girls are trained so I can get my weekends back.”

It was a bit of a ruckus with so many girls getting changed at once, but ten minutes later, we bid goodbye to Sadie and Kennedi while the other girls reported for duty in their new outfits.

“Looking very good, ladies,” said Paulina, inspecting all of them as if she were a drill sergeant looking for anything that was even slightly unkempt. “You look ready for action! Follow me, we’re going to Kennedi’s room.”

Upon arrival, Paulina extended her hand, pointing to Kennedi’s bed. “As you can probably tell, there was a significant battle that was fought here last night. And now we need to clean it up.”

Bridgette took one look at the bed and smirked at me. “Yeah, it definitely looks like some very hard action was fought here.”

“We got a little carried away last night,” I admitted, turning red at the memory.

“Just a little?” asked Bridgette. “When do I get my turn?”

“Okay, ladies!” interrupted Paulina. “Time to get started. Bridgette, I’d like you to run the vacuum and pick up anything on the floor. Cassidy, let’s see how you make the bed and clean the windows. Nikki, I’d like you to attend to the closet, putting things away as well as any leftover plates or food items that were left behind. Snap to it, ladies!”

Paulina didn’t even need to blow her whistle, because each of the new girls took to their tasks immediately. I pulled back to the door to watch with Paulina, especially as Bridgette plugged in the vacuum.

“Looking good so far,” I said while we watched the girls work. “No glaring red flags from what I can see.”

“Time will tell,” said Paulina more ominously. “Anyone can make a bed. It’s making sure you maintain the skill with proper function when you have to make twenty beds a day. Let’s see how they’re doing after I tire them out a little.”

“Ma’am, yes ma’am,” I teased, giving her a salute. “Just take it easy on the troops. I’m going to get some work done on the website.”

She lowered her eyelashes and smiled. “Maybe you can show your general a little TLC after this is all done? Like what you showed Kennedi and Sadie last night?”

“Ma’am, it would be an honor and a privilege to do so.”

Paulina giggled. “I was hoping you’d say that!”

Chapter Eight

The rest of the morning really flew by. I got a lot of work done on the website, mostly adding some more videos that explained our process and what to expect from Goblin Girl Maid Service. Sadie showed me how to measure just how much traffic we were getting a few weeks back, and with the recent changes, we were really starting to attract more attention.

By the time I took a break for lunch, I was feeling great about our prospects for the future.

While I was working, I could also hear Paulina and the new girls moving throughout the house. Paulina had them move from room to room, cleaning as they went and teaching them the best ways to get the job done. Every once in a while I could hear the other girls chime in, but it was mostly Paulina trying to help them to a better job.

I wasn't expecting much company for lunch, so I pulled out the elvish pizza from the shoe box it was in and started to reheat it. By the time I sat down and took the first bite, I heard sounds of movement behind me.

"Oh my gosh, is that pizza?"

I turned my head to see Cassidy walking into the kitchen. She looked tired from all that she'd done so far, but even with weary eyes, she was still looking really cute wearing that maid outfit.

"I have plenty of extra pizza if you want some?" I offered.

Her eyes rolled upward. "Oh, yes please! I'm starving!"

"Here, sit down," I said, gesturing to the table. At that point, I realized that she really couldn't sit down like the rest of us, but Cassidy didn't take it personally.

Instead, she moved closer to the table and lowered her hind legs, sitting upright almost like a cat would.

"You live around bi-peds long enough and you learn how to interpret the things they say," she said, giving me an innocent smile.

“So you’ll be prepared when I put my foot in my mouth? Great!” I said, heating up her pizza and bringing it to her. I took my seat and took my first bite.

“You know Nikki made this right? She worked at our favorite pizza place before coming here to work for us.”

“She makes a really good pizza!” said Cassidy. “Is that roasted pheasant I taste?”

“The elves only make the best.”

“So is it wrong of me to ask why she left?” asked Cassidy. “Or am I being too nosy?”

“From what I heard, she couldn’t get enough hours,” I replied. “I guess she’s in danger of losing her apartment.”

“Oh, that poor woman,” exclaimed Cassidy. “That’s terrible. I hate hearing that. I know how that feels though. The feeling of not having somewhere to go. It’s harder than it looks.”

There was something about the way she said it that made me want to pry.

“Is all well with your living situation?” I asked. “You have a place to stay, don’t you?”

Cassidy nodded quickly as she looked away from me. I could tell there was some embarrassment there.

“It’s just that I think my parents would be happier if I left their house already,” she explained. “I don’t blame them for thinking that at all. I’m twenty-one after all. Most centaurs leave the house between sixteen and eighteen. I’ve just been unlucky a few times. Tried to leave twice but ended up coming back. Bad roommates, you know?”

“Sometimes you never know just what you’re going to get.”

Cassidy giggled. “Just like a box of chocolates right?”

She mimicked the accent from the movie, which made me laugh.

“You know, I have a hard time believing that someone wouldn’t want you around. Every interaction I’ve had with you since we met has been extremely pleasant. You just seem like a great person to me.”

Cassidy turned so red that she might as well have been a tomato. “You’re just being nice.”

“No, I’m really not!” I said, reaching across the table to touch her hand. In hindsight, I didn’t know why I did that. Even still, her hand was warm to the touch and she didn’t seem to mind.

“I like you. I think you’re a sweetheart,” I said. “I wouldn’t be trying to kick you out if you lived with us.”

“That’s really, really nice of you,” she said. “Sometimes I just feel like I have bad luck. Like I have this permanent dark cloud following me.”

“Maybe your luck is about to change? Maybe you’re about to get this job?”

“I really hope so,” she said with a smile.

We talked for about ten more minutes until she finished her pizza. At that point, it was Nikki’s turn to take her break and the girls swapped places.

I had to admit that I was a little sad to see Cassidy go. There was just something about her that made me want to make her happy. She seemed like she had so much to offer the world, but she was just this bundle of nervous energy all the time.

When we hired her, I wanted to make sure we worked on changing that.

Being around Nikki was a complete change of pace from Cassidy. So far we hadn’t exactly seen eye-to-eye, and I thought to excuse myself to get back to work when she started talking to me before I could leave.

“Being a maid is tough,” she said, after fishing out her shoe box and reheating a slice of pizza. “I don’t know how those girls do it all day.”

“It’s not for everyone,” I said. “It’s amazing how dirty most places can become if someone’s not there to clean it up for you. Having a maid can be an essential service for most people, and it’s definitely not easy work.”

“It’s cool though,” she said, setting down her pizza on the table. “It’s better than the pizza shop. I could make a mean pizza, but they never wanted to give me more hours. Ultimately, I just couldn’t work there any longer.”

As Nikki talked, she reached down into her back and pulled out two things that immediately caught my attention. The first was this incredibly large green candle that looked like something you would see out of a spooky movie. She set it on the table and grabbed a lighter to start the flame.

Right after she did that, Nikki grabbed the second thing, which was a small book with some weird writing on the front. She unclasped it and pulled it open with an audible *thud* as it smacked against the table. She scrolled through several pages until she found the one that she wanted.

“Evil spirits of the dead, I call to you now,” said Nikki, her voice taking on a much deeper quality. “Give your blessing to this meal and let it provide me with the nourishment to destroy my enemies.”

Okay, I was a little creeped out now. “What the hell are you doing?”

Nikki glanced at me and tilted her head. “Saying grace? What are *you* doing?”

“Is this how you say grace?” I said, pointing to the candle. “This thing looks like you’re trying to steal the green ranger’s powers or something. Why is it so big?”

“It’s a candle to Malfiore, the great underworld demon lord of Dragonmont City,” replied Nikki, as if the answer was so obvious that it didn’t need to be explained. “I say grace to him every time I eat so he protects me as his humble servant.”

“Umm, that’s . . . different,” I said, not really knowing what to say. The last thing I expected was for her to start a damn goth seance in my house.

Nikki actually giggled. “Don’t worry. I’m not calling down evil spirits on you or anything. Malfiore is actually a very generous demon lord. He gives lots of second and third chances, you know, before he takes your soul and damns you to eternal torment in the underworld.”

“I’m glad you said that because my opinion of him is already turning around. He sounds like just a swell guy.”

“Right?” replied Nikki, clearly not getting my sarcasm. “You wouldn’t believe how freaked out people get about this. I mean, it’s not like I’m some kind of sorceress myself. I mean, yes, I did curse a family of really

misbehaving trolls before, but only because they stole some pepperoni and pelted me with it. Truthfully, I think they earned what they got."

"Clearly. If you can't curse someone for throwing pepperoni, then what can you curse them for?"

Nikki's mouth opened in shock right before her smile grew even larger. "This is crazy. I've never met someone so in sync with me. I think you might just have some of Malfiore's maleficent spirit in you too!"

I was trying to hold back my laughter. Not because I thought what she was saying was ridiculous. I definitely thought it was, but I could see how grateful it made Nikki that there seemed to be someone else out there in the world that appreciated her values.

Even if that wasn't exactly the case, who was I to rain on her parade?

The whole conversation was more than slightly crazy, but I could tell that it meant something to Nikki that someone understood her. And I doubted that happened much to her with her unique array of . . . hobbies.

By the time her break was over, we covered a lot of ground. Nikki was explaining the seven planes of hell to me, as well as the demon lord that reigned over each of them. She told me where she got her spell book (from DiscountCo, on sale for the low price of 5 opals) to where she got her candles (the dragonkin merchant who had the stall under the Second Street bridge).

I felt like I knew her better than most, and that was just after fifteen minutes of honest conversation.

"You know, you really surprised me," said Nikki as she put away her candle and her spell book. "My first impression of you was that you were a total square."

"A square?" I repeated, chuckling. "You mean lame?"

"Oh, definitely," she said. "Most mortals are lame to some degree."

"Well, there you have it. I'm not mortal. This is my second life."

Nikki snapped her fingers. "I knew it. I knew there was something different about you. I bet you Malfiore marked you as his apprentice when

you died the first time. It's the only thing that makes sense. Clearly, we're kindred spirits."

"Maybe you're right. Maybe we are."

I didn't expect what happened next. Nikki gestured for me to stand up from the table and as soon as she did, she hugged me as tightly as she could.

"Thanks for being so cool," she said. "I wasn't expecting much from this new job, but I think I'll stick around because of you."

"Oh, well, you're welcome," I said, at a loss for words. I hugged her back though, not hating the feeling one bit. Underneath all this black attire, Nikki had a great body, especially as it was now pushing against me.

She pulled away and tucked her silverish hair behind her ear. "Time to get back to work. Say a chant to Malfiore for me that there's not much left."

"Somehow, I don't think he'd listen," I said, which only made her laugh. She waved as she left the kitchen, making me wonder just what I'd gotten myself into.

At least I wasn't hungry anymore. I didn't feel like doing any more work, but what sounded really great was the chance to take a shower. I made a quick stop in my room to grab some fresh clothes, marveling at how clean a room could stay when no one was really living here.

After grabbing a pair of shorts and a new shirt, I headed down the hall until I reached the bathroom, turning on the light and closing the door behind me. I turned the water on, mostly because it always took a few minutes to heat up.

I stripped off the shirt I was wearing, taking a moment to look at myself in the mirror. I was no muscle-head, but I always felt like I was well put together thanks to a childhood that constantly involved sports to some degree.

I went to check the water temperature again, and that's when I heard the door click open behind me. I didn't need to turn around to realize what was happening.

I had a visitor in the shower, and I knew exactly who it was.

“During the middle of boot camp, Paulina?” I asked, still testing the water temperature. “You were really serious about wanting to get laid after last night, weren’t you?”

“Oh, this isn’t Paulina, sexy.”

Never had I moved as quickly in my life. I almost moved too fast, grabbing the shower curtain when I started to slip. I ripped several of the rings off when I turned around, only to find Bridgette staring back at me with a grin that could only be described as “hungry.”

“Oh, Bridgette, I . . . wasn’t expecting you,” I said, trying to keep my composure in front of her. “Oh, I get it, you’re on your lunch break, aren’t you?”

She didn’t break eye contact or say a single word. Instead, Bridgette nodded while keeping that little smile firmly planted on her face.

“Ah, an easy mistake,” I said. “This is the bathroom, obviously. Shower, toilet, and sink, of course. But you want the kitchen, where there’s still plenty of food. In fact, Nikki brought over some elvish pizza for all of us. Do you like elvish pizza?”

Bridgette still didn’t say anything. She took a single step closer to me as her eyes raked over my exposed torso. I could feel myself getting harder under her steamy gaze.

“Um, you were looking for the kitchen?” I asked one more time, just in case she hadn’t heard me.

Bridgette’s smile grew larger and she shook her head.

“But I thought you were on your lunch break. Are you hungry?”

Her smile grew larger still. She nodded her head this time. “I’m hungry for something alright. Starving actually.”

I’d seen enough late-night softcore movies to know exactly where this was going. If you followed the usual script, I was supposed to keep playing dumb right up until Bridgette started undressing and spontaneously blowing me.

But that was only in the movies, right? Even in a fantastical world like Dragonmont City, that shit didn’t really happen like that.

I couldn’t have been more wrong, especially when Bridgette grabbed the hem of her maid outfit and suddenly ripped it up over her head.

By the evil heart of Malfiore, she was fucking *sexy*. I had to remember to put my tongue back in my mouth as I gazed on the perfection that was Bridgette. Even for a woman nearly ten years older than everyone else in the house, she was incredibly toned, athletic, and just downright hot.

What I loved the most about her was her exposed stomach. I could make out every single abdominal muscle on her body, covered by that thin layer of green skin without a stitch of fat to it. Even her tits were amazing, small as they were. Her nipples were on the smaller side, but they were puffy in a way that made them look like the part of the cupcake that wasn’t inside the tray.

“Wow,” was all I could say once she took another step closer to me.

“I was hoping you’d say that,” said Bridgette, letting out a nervous laugh. “It’s not often an old lady gets such looks. Especially not the one you’re giving me right now.”

“You are definitely not an old lady,” I said. “Fuck, you are all woman, Bridgette. Gorgeous.”

That mysterious smile returned. “Ever since I first saw you yesterday, I haven’t been able to get you off my mind. You were in my thoughts all last night, when I ate, when I read, and especially when I showered.”

She slipped her hand into the stream of water, which had grown hot by this point. Wetting her hand, she cupped her small breast and then used her finger to tease her nipple. I watched, speechless, as beads of wetness dropped onto the head of her nipple and then slid down her washboard abs.

“Do you want to know what I thought about in the shower?” she whispered sultrily.

“Tell me.”

Bridgette bit her lip and reached for more water. This time, she rubbed my chest instead of her own, making sure to pay attention to my own nipples.

“I thought about getting you naked,” she admitted. “I thought about what it might feel like to put my lips all over your body. Your chest, your thighs,

and even . . .” She leaned in closer until her lips were inches from my ear. “Your cock.”

If there was some kind of record for fastest 0-to-60 erection, I would have taken home the gold. It was almost painful to still be wearing shorts now, especially since Bridgette was only wearing her maid skirt.

“But I had to try to be good,” continued Bridgette, pulling away slightly as her fingernails glided across my stomach. “I didn’t want to lose a new job because I couldn’t contain my undeniable, unbearable horniness for you.”

“Unbearable horniness for me?” I repeated breathlessly.

Bridgette giggled and continued to rub my chest. “It’s absolutely *relentless*. Those sexy thoughts that just don’t go away. Seeing you whenever I close my eyes. I just knew I had to have you. I had to get you alone with me the first chance I got. Thankfully, someone else knows exactly how I’m feeling right now.”

That part confused me. “Someone else. Who?”

“Kennedi,” replied Bridgette. “I guess she could read what I was feeling a mile away. Before she left this morning, she told me to enjoy myself if I got the chance. The smile on her face left no doubt about what she was talking about.”

Bridgette’s hand finally reached the hem of my shorts. She danced her fingers along the top, even though I could tell she wanted to rip them down.

“You have a very unique situation here, Kevin,” she said, her hand moving over the bulge in my shorts. She squeezed it and moaned simultaneously. “A house full of goblin girls that are totally enraptured by you. I wonder if there’s room for one more?”

“You might have to talk to Paulina about that,” I managed to say, as she rubbed me outside my shorts.

Bridgette let out a throaty giggle. “Already one step ahead of you. I like to hedge all my bets, you see. Even after Kennedi gave me the green light, I said something to Paulina too. And do you want to know what she said?”

The anticipation was absolutely killing me. Could you be reborn twice? I felt like I was about to find out.

“What?”

Bridgette squeezed me again as she leaned in closer. “She told me if I wanted to fuck your brains out, I was more than welcome to it.”

I’m still not sure how I didn’t come right then and there. I definitely felt it in my balls—that dull ache of an orgasm that felt like it could trigger any second. Any part of me that was still sated from last night evaporated only to leave me feeling like a teenager with raging hormones and a new subscription to *Playboy*.

At least I didn’t have to worry about a response. Especially not when Bridgette kissed me right after she finished speaking. She pushed her lips to mine in a way that was hungry and needy, probing my mouth almost from the start. This was a woman that was experienced enough to know exactly what she wanted, and she wasted no time telling me once the kiss broke.

“Now, I’m going to have just a little taste of you,” she said. “Just a single, solitary taste to tide me over with what little time we have.”

My shorts hit the ground faster than a fat kid falling off a seesaw. My cock looked like one of those bobble-heads that had just been giving a good smack. Bridgette wasted no time in wrapping her hands around my length. Before I knew it, she was down on her knees, and she licked my cock like it was a frozen treat on a hot summer’s day.

She didn’t just stop there. While one hand worked my shaft, Bridgette’s other hand came up to play with my balls. In no time at all, she was working both hands and her mouth in tandem, drawing me deeper down her throat.

It quickly became apparent to me just how experienced Bridgette was. It felt like she was making love to my cock with her mouth, knowing just the right amount of suction and teasing to bring me almost to the edge. Right as I felt ready to pop, she let me come back down again, relaxing her grip.

We did this three times until I was positively ready to burst. This time, Bridgette took me all the way up to the brink again, maintaining tight

suction around the tip as her tongue bathed the underside. It all proved to be too much.

“F-fuck, I’m gonna cum,” I managed to get out right as I felt the first spurt rocket up my shaft.

Bridgette pulled me out of her mouth and aimed me at her tits. The first few blasts coated her tiny breasts, splashing against the tight skin and ricocheting off just as quickly. Before I was done firing, I had the distinct pleasure of watching my cum moving down the lines of her abs—a sight that I would have to see again.

The entire time I was cumming, Bridgette kept her eyes trained on me, that mischievous smirk never once leaving her face.

I felt like we’d been in here for an hour, but when I touched the water, it was still running hot. It just took me an extra minute to compose myself while Bridgette scooped the cum off her chest right into her mouth.

“Just as sweet as I thought it would be,” she said, sucking her finger clean as her eyes locked on mine. “We have to do *that* again.”

I couldn’t have said no if I wanted to. If the fate the entire city rested on me rejecting Bridgette for another go-around, the city would have been utterly fucked.

“Wow,” I said. “That was . . . uh, really great.”

Bridgette giggled and stood up. She leaned in and kissed me sweetly.

“I just want to be clear about something,” she said. “I like you. And I can tell by how much cum you just shot on my chest that you really like me too. Let’s not do this whole awkward around each other phase and just see where this whole thing goes, okay?”

I started to chuckle. “You’re not one to beat around the bush, are you?”

Bridgette grinned wickedly. She then pulled up her skirt and grabbed my hand at the same time. One swipe under her skirt was all that happened before she replied.

“That’s because I don’t have a bush, Kevin,” she said sweetly.

Damn. She had me dead to rights there. Her mound was entirely smooth and bare, without a stitch of hair.

Once she lowered her skirt, she kissed me one more time. “I think my break is over. Enjoy your shower. Don’t think about me too much in there. And if you do start thinking about me, well, you know exactly where to find me.”

I was still speechless as she walked out of the room.

Somehow, I felt the need to turn on the cold water after an encounter with Bridgette.

Chapter Nine

"That little, kinky slut! In the shower! That's my domain!"

Later that evening, the three original girls and I went out to Banshee Burgers in order to celebrate a successful boot camp. It was already dark out, mostly since we had to wait for Sadie and Kennedi to get back home, change, and then make themselves ready to go out again. While we were waiting to give our burgers, Paulina and I gave them a rundown on everything that happened today, including my rendezvous with Bridgette in the shower.

Sadie and Paulina both found the shower encounter amusing, but it was surprisingly Kennedi who took offense to it.

"Why does it bother you so much, Kennedi?" asked Sadie, between glances at the menu. "You've done that and worse with Kevin on a regular basis. Besides, I thought you gave Bridgette permission to go after Kevin?"

Kennedi pursed her lips. "She can fuck him all she wants, but our group only works when there's just one really slutty girl in it and that's me! I'm the kinky one. What am I going to do if there's someone in competition with me, determined to out-kink me at every step of the way? I might lose my touch. Why couldn't she have been a little boring?"

"That's what you're worried about?" asked Paulina, giggling as she tucked her dark hair behind her ear. "You're so weird, Kennedi."

Kennedi crossed her arms in front of her heavy breasts. "I'm just saying. Having two dirty sluts in a group means we're going to constantly be crossing signals. It might throw our whole dynamic off. I mean, what if Kevin likes the kinky shit she tries more than what I do?"

I could tell Kennedi was feeling a little self-conscious, so I put my arm around her shoulders.

"You don't have anything to worry about," I promised her. "Yes, getting head from Bridgette was a mind-blowing experience, but you and I have had so many that she would need to play catch-up for many months to

even come close to where we are. Trust me, you have nothing to worry about."

I could still see anxiety in her eyes. "You promise?"

"Absolutely. You have my promise."

"I'm still your dirty little slut, aren't I?"

"Uh, welcome to Banshee Burger."

Both Kennedi and I turned red as our server finally arrived. Sadie and Paulina snickered at the sudden intrusion while I felt mostly tongue-tied.

Damn banshees. No matter how long I lived in Dragonmont City, I never quite got used to them. They just give me the creeps, from their silvery, translucent bodies to the grotesque positions their faces were usually contorted into. The problem that I had with banshees was that they usually were frozen in the same position they were in when they died. And seeing as banshees were only created when someone died miserably, that position usually wasn't a good one.

In our case, our server tonight was a banshee with half their arm hanging off, severed just below the shoulder to the point that there were only a few sinews of flesh left to keep it attached. There was also a gaping hole in her neck, like something had been jammed in there trying to remove her head as well.

Her name tag said her name was Gerty, and she was wearing the standard waitress outfit as she stood next to our table. It's just her wounds were a little distracting, especially considering she somehow had the full use of her severed arm.

"Welcome to Banshee Burger, home of the Screamin' Shake and Freaky Fries," said Gerty. "What can I get you today?"

Kennedi just sank back into her seat out of embarrassment while Paulina ordered four Screamin' Shakes for all of us, letting the waitress slink away.

"Ugh, why do I always put my foot in my mouth?" moaned Kennedi, touching her face with her hands.

“It’s part of your charm,” replied Sadie. “You wouldn’t be you if you weren’t saying something stupid or crazy half the time.”

Kennedi sighed, but I touched my hand to hers to reassure her. “Don’t worry, you’re still my kinky little slut, remember?”

That earned a smile, and she didn’t let go of her grip on my hand.

“So what is the final assessment on the new girls then?” Sadie asked Paulina. “Are they going to cut it? They all survived drill sergeant Paulina and will be reporting for duty?”

“Well, it should come as no surprise that Bridgette did exceptionally well,” replied Paulina. “Even servicing our hunky boyfriend, she fits in with us like she’s been doing it all along. We could start her tomorrow and she’ll be just fine. In fact, I’m going to put her with Sadie tomorrow as you go about your day. Just want you to watch her and make sure she’s ready to work on her own.”

Sadie gave her a mock salute. “Aye, aye, captain.”

Paulina let out a sigh. “As for the other girls, well, I’m not sure. I’ll be honest—I’m most worried about Cassidy.”

“Cassidy?” repeated Sadie with surprise. “That’s not who I expected you to say.”

Kennedi brightened. “My Nikki did good today?”

“Better than I expected,” replied Paulina. “I mean, the morning was a little touch and go, but after lunch she seemed to really figure things out and shine. I was really surprised.”

“That might be some of my influence there,” I said, waving my hand. “We bonded over lunch a little. It was a total accident really.”

Kennedi gave me a lascivious grin as she elbowed my side. “You plumbed her cherry too, didn’t you? You total chad you. I can’t believe you fucked Nikki too!”

“No, no, that’s not what happened,” I said quickly, though the idea was intriguing to me. I hadn’t even considered the idea of intimacy with Nikki. That wasn’t surprising—she was more than just a little weird, but for some reason Kennedi’s words got me thinking about it.

What would it be like to have sex with Nikki? I think Kennedi would be disappointed, mostly because I could see Nikki wresting the kinky trophy away from her or Bridgette very easily. Nikki was probably the type that didn't have sex without sacrificing a small animal to her demon lord anyway.

"We bonded over her . . . erm, religious practices," I said, wincing in the process.

"Why does that sound like there's a lot more to the story?" asked Sadie. "What religious practices are you talking about?"

"She's not a Hare Krishna, is she?" groaned Kennedi, but not before she looked at Paulina and mouthed, "never again."

I laughed. "No, but she does worship some demon lord named Malfiore, so that's interesting to say the least."

"Somehow, I'm not the least bit surprised," said Paulina.

"I wasn't that surprised either, but she thinks I know about it, so we bonded over it," I said. "I think that's why her attitude changed over lunch."

"Well, whatever you did, keep doing it," urged Paulina. "Because it definitely worked. I also didn't see her pop a single pink mushroom all day, so I think she holds a lot of promise."

Kennedi leaned into me. "You hear that? Being with you is better than being on drugs!"

I chuckled. "I'm glad you think so."

"Truthfully, the one who worries me the most is Cassidy," said Paulina, returning back to topic. "She's just not that graceful. At one point, she even kicked over a lamp in Kennedi's room and broke it during our cleaning."

Kennedi's mouth fell open. She grabbed my arm to establish herself. "Not my Oliver the Ogre 25th anniversary commemorative lamp, was it? Tell me it wasn't that one!"

Paulina cracked a smile. "Uh, no. Just some regular lamp near your bed."

Kennedi let out a sigh of relief. “Thank the demon lord Malfiore. That would have been terrible.”

“Ugh, you too?” I asked.

Kennedi shrugged. “I figured it was worth trying out.”

“Anyway, Cassidy is just kind of clumsy,” continued Paulina. “And she didn’t catch onto things as well as I would have hoped. I also wish I didn’t put her in the kitchen because I think she broke more dishes than she actually cleaned.”

“But we’re not going to fire her, right?” asked a fearful Sadie, and it wasn’t hard to see why she was taking the news so hard. Cassidy was her pick, and no one wanted to see their friends dismissed.

“No, but I’m going to spend extra time with her,” said Paulina. “In no way do I think she can’t be a maid. I just think some extra time going over the basics will be helpful to her. And I want to make sure she understands what happens when she makes a sudden move and backs that big ass of hers onto something expensive. She might just crush a lamp or worse.”

“I agree with giving her extra training,” I said. “Cassidy is a sweet girl, and I can tell she wants to make this work. Considering her situation at home, I think it’s best that we keep trying to make her better.”

Sadie couldn’t have looked more relieved to hear that. “I’m glad to hear that too. She would just be crushed otherwise. For such a sweet girl, her confidence is surprisingly low.”

“We’ll do our part to raise it,” I said. “People like Cassidy just need someone to take a chance on them. Give them the opportunity to show what a star they really are. She’ll surprise us before this is all over. I just know it.”

“Going to go after her too, eh?” asked Kennedi, elbowing me in the side again. “That brings up an excellent question. How exactly would you fuck a centaur?”

“Erm, do you guys know what you want to order?”

If Kennedi could have vanished into thin air, she would have. Gerty was now back at our table and looking at her like she was some kind of

deviant.

At least she got her wish to always be perceived as the slutty one. That should have been a minor win if nothing else.

“Four double banshee burgers, each with an order of Freaky Fries,” said Paulina. “Oh, and do you still have that spicy ketchup?”

Gerty nodded. “Ketchup with jalapeno? You bet.”

“Two orders of that,” said Paulina, grinning as she glanced at me. “For Kevin and I.”

“Perfect, I’ll get that right over to you, with your shakes.”

Kennedi waited until she left before glancing around to make sure no one else was coming. When she was finally certain, she leaned forward and kept her voice lowered. “The question still stands. How do you fuck centaurs?”

All three of us laughed. I was mostly amused by Kennedi’s lack of tact, but it seemed the other girls got more enjoyment out of her actual question.

“The same way we would do it, silly,” replied Sadie. “Well, almost at least. Centaur girls are just like us when it comes to their lower halves. They have an extra pair of legs and a tail, but her vagina is going to be in the front, like where you would expect to find it with any other woman.”

“So what’s under the tail?” blurted Kennedi. “Just her butt hole?”

Sadie started to laugh. “So discreet, but yes. Bu that’s what makes centaur women unique. Mostly woman in the front but with the extra set of hooves.”

“I never would have imagined!” said Kennedi. “I just thought she’d have to be mounted, like a wild beast.”

For good measure, Kennedi roared, which made me laugh even more. Personally, I was grateful for her, because I didn’t want to admit that I was in the same boat as Kennedi.

Oddly enough though, my curiosity was now piqued about the physics of centaur sex.

“Can you only do it standing up?” I asked. “You know, I don’t think Cassidy sleeps in a bed is all that I’m saying.”

Sadie shrugged. “I suppose so. I never asked her, though I’d be willing to bet that Cassidy has never done it at all. Centaurs can lay down too, so I think it’s doable.”

“Just make sure you ask her the next time you see her,” said Kennedi. “Let’s get to the bottom of this.”

Sadie gave her a mocking head nod. “Oh, right, I’ll make that top priority to find out how she likes to have sex. Good idea.”

Kennedi didn’t seem to understand she was being made fun of. She flashed Sadie a thumbs-up. “Awesome!”

“All jokes aside, there is something else a little more serious that we should talk about,” said Paulina without much of a warning. We’d all just received our Screamin’ Shakes, which make a slight sound that’s similar to screaming when you sucked through the straw. We all took a break to take the first sip before Paulina continued.

“Has anyone ever heard of a maid service company called Extravagant Home Services?”

All of us shook our heads.

“What kind of maid service company is that?” asked Sadie. “It doesn’t even sound like a maid service judging by the name.”

“Yeah, it sounds like someone you might call to get a second-rate clown to do a kid’s birthday party,” said Kennedi. “The kind that shows up with two bottles of helium—one for the kids and one for himself.”

“That’s kinda what I thought in the beginning,” said Paulina. “But apparently it’s not just for maids. They do many things because it’s a big corporation that includes not only maid service, but gardening, repair work, plumbers, electricians, pool boys—basically anyone that could be performing some kind of service inside the home, they touch.”

“I’m not following this,” said Kennedi. “How does this affect us? We’ve had others compete in that space before but generally they don’t do well because they don’t focus on maid service.”

“That’s where this company is a little different,” explained Paulina. “I’ve noticed them before when it came to bidding on jobs. They are always one of the low bidders, which makes sense before they need something extra to get potential clients to look at them. They’ve won an odd job here or there, but there have been two developments recently that I thought were a little troubling.”

Paulina ticked off one finger. “The first was that they won a contract for one of the fairy penthouse buildings downtown. Like two blocks from the Beauman. It’s not a massive contract—only about eighteen penthouses—but it’s way bigger than anything they won before.”

“Everyone gets lucky sometimes,” said Sadie. “But what’s the second thing?”

“The second thing is why the first is so alarming. They only got it because they purchased another maid company, bringing on their talent to win the deal. Kennedi, do you remember a company called Yvette’s Maids ‘n More?”

A spark of recognition appeared on Kennedi’s face. “Of course. I haven’t seen Yvette in almost a year though. She was just slightly bigger than us. Had about five to ten maids at any one time.”

“Well, Extravagant Home Services did a hostile takeover of Yvette’s company,” said Paulina. “They bought out the maids from under her and put her out of business. It was with that extra maid-power that they won this new contract. Now, the word on the forum is that this EHS is only getting started. They are talking to other maid services, trying to buy up everyone in the city. I have confirmation that they’ve reached out to two others that we talk to on a regular basis.”

“They sound like vultures,” I said. “Are they trying to have complete control of the maid industry in Dragonmont City?”

“That’s my impression, but maid service is only one facet of what they touch,” said Paulina. “I talked to Yvette this afternoon, and she still stays in contact with her former maids. EHS cut all their wages so the maids are all worse off. That doesn’t seem to be an exception to the rule either. It’s their standard operating procedure.”

“Cut out all your competitors and then cut your employee wages,” I said. “So they’re trying to create a monopoly in our space.”

“Something we should all be aware of,” said Paulina. “I haven’t been approached by anyone, but I just wanted you all to be aware. If this company is buying up maid services, it’s only a matter of time until we run into them. I don’t know how all of you feel, but I’m not about to sell our business to some faceless corporate entity.”

“Yeah, fuck the man!” agreed Kennedi, putting her fist in the air. “We’re not going down without a fight!”

“We’ll just have to see what happens, but I agree with Kennedi,” I said. “This is our business. And we’re not going to let anyone try to buy it up or run us out of town with it.”

Paulina smiled and reached across the table to grab my hand. “I love all of you. And I love what we’ve created. I really believe we have the best maid service in Dragonmont City.”

“You better believe it, sister,” agreed Kennedi.

Chapter Ten

The next morning, Goblin Girl Maid service opened up with six maids on staff instead of the usual three. I was there during the first sendoff, when the new girls arrived at the house for the day's briefing by Paulina, and then I waved as all of them left to start their shifts.

"Good luck today!" I told the new girls as they left. "You're going to be great. Just keep in mind the training that Paulina gave you, and I know things will work out."

It was a different experience saying goodbye to each girl. Nikki insisted that we clasp hands together and say a quick chant to Malfiore, which might have been the most awkward moment of my life (but the most amusing one for Kennedi as she watched us).

Bridgette didn't say much as she left. But she did mouth the words, "I want to suck your cock," right as she exited the door.

Of all of them, Cassidy's reaction to leaving was the most genuine. She was wearing her maid outfit, which looked incredibly cute on her, framing her perky breasts in that black top with white lace. Her face was full of anxiety, but that seemed to be more the norm than it was the exception.

"Don't worry about a thing," I told her privately. "We have the utmost confidence in you."

Cassidy crossed her fingers. "I really hope I don't break anything."

I hoped that the day went better than she expected. Surely once she did the job, everything would work out, right?

Now that I was alone, I decided to get some work done of my own. I had some bookkeeping work to take care of, mostly receipts for various jobs we'd done as well as some of the supplies we had to pick up to maintain the service we provided. That took me until around 10:30 to do, at which case I took a break to jump into the shower.

After my shower, I sat down at the computer for another hour until I was starting to think about lunch. I knew we were out of elvish pizza (damnit!),

but I thought we still had some leftover goblin pot roast from the other night.

It turned out we did. I grabbed a decent amount, put it on a plate, and stuck it in the microwave when the phone rang.

It was Paulina, which was my first indication that something was wrong. She usually didn't call me during the day unless something was up.

"Hey, gorgeous, what's going on?"

Paulina let out a sigh almost from the beginning. "I think we have a big problem."

"What's wrong?"

"Cassidy left me. I can't find her anywhere."

The way Paulina told it, Cassidy's morning just went from bad to worse. She didn't even get the chance to start off on the right foot, as the pair ran into the fairy that owned the first penthouse they stopped at.

"Uh, Paulina, is this your assistant or something?" asked the fairy—a rude debutante that wore too much makeup and looked to be about ten years older than she actually was.

"Oh no, Mrs. Lane, this is Cassidy," said Paulina, making the introduction. "She's just joined my company as a new maid."

Mrs. Lane blanched visibly. "But she's not a goblin girl."

"Um, right," replied Paulina. "We're branching out a little. And Cassidy is very talented—"

"I don't want a centaur in my penthouse," said Mrs. Lane, crossing her arms. "Gangly creatures, I tell you. Not only will she probably eat the food in my penthouse but she'll probably poop on the floor too!"

Paulina was able to calm her down, but it was the beginning of the end. Any confidence that Cassidy had was shot from the beginning, and it didn't get any better when they started doing their job. By the time they

arrived at the third penthouse, Cassidy had already broken one end table by backing into it, and she had cracked the tile in the customer's bathroom.

"I'm not cut out for this!" said Cassidy, her eyes filling with tears. "I'm not meant to be a maid. I'm sorry, Paulina, I just can't do this. I can't!"

"And that was the last I saw her," Paulina told me. "I figured I'd give her a minute. I mean, who wouldn't want some time to themselves after that? But when I went to go check on her, she was gone."

"Shit. Any idea where she might have gone?"

"That's partly why I was calling," said Paulina. "She didn't go back there, did she?"

I raced to the front window and looked outside. There was no sight of Cassidy anywhere near the house.

"Nope, not a trace," I said.

"Do you think you can find her for me?" asked Paulina. "I have too many rooms that still need my attention today. I think she said she lives in the Hydra Heights neighborhood south of the city. Can you track her down? I just want to make sure she's okay."

"I'm on it, babe. I'll find her, I promise."

I could hear her melt on the other side of the phone. "I love you so much," she said. "Let me know what you find."

Once we hung up, the race was on. I knew that Cassidy's living situation wasn't what she was most proud about, but I also suspected it was where she could go first. In bad times, usually the first place anyone would go would be to those we considered family.

If that was the case, I had to find out where she lived in Hydra Heights.

I pulled up Stoogle Maps and immediately clicked on the section of the city known as Hydra Heights. It wasn't that far from the duplex. Maybe fifteen minutes to the south of us, where it was more residential than our own area.

I knew Cassidy's full name thanks to her official application, and it was amazing how quickly I was able to bring up results, including a home address, on the web.

"Guess internet privacy is just as much an issue here as it is back on Earth," I mumbled to myself.

Once I had the address, I slipped on my shoes and practically ran out the door. Time was definitely of the essence right now. Cassidy's internal demons were strong, and it would be much harder to get her to give the company a second chance the more time that passed by.

For that reason alone, I made the trip to Hydra Heights in less than ten minutes. I knew I arrived in the right neighborhood when I started seeing families of hydras all over the place. They weren't the magical creatures that lived here, but it was close to the sea and many of the streets here were made up of crisscrossing canals. I nearly smashed into one family on my way there, but they accepted my half-hearted apologies without too much trouble.

"Slow down next time, young man!" called out the patriarch of the family. "Your lady friend will wait for you. You don't need to run!"

I didn't stop to tell him how on target he actually was. Was it that easy to read me?

When I came to Cassidy's street, I found the house that she lived in. It was a modest ranch-style house that was entirely situated on one floor. The entrances were a lot larger than they were for other creatures, mostly to make up for the larger features of the centaurs. I knocked on the door and waited until someone opened up.

It was an older man by the looks of him. He had gray around his temples with wisps of silver throughout the rest of his hair. He had bright green eyes that reminded me of Cassidy's, but they didn't have anywhere near the warmth that hers held. His lower coat of hair was colored black like the hair that wasn't streaked with silver. He was wearing long slacks over his four legs and a button-down cardigan in the front.

"Can I help you?" he asked, staring me down. "Tell me you didn't hit my wagon out front. I *just* paid up my insurance."

“Um no,” I said quickly. “I was looking for Cassidy. I hope I have the right house.”

He nodded quickly and stepped out of my way. “Third door to the right,” he said, pointing down the hall.

Something about that interaction struck me as very strange. He didn’t ask why I was here, so he likely already knew, but it was almost as if he didn’t care beyond that. Knowing what Cassidy had told me about her home life, it kinda pissed me off right from the start.

I could feel my mood turning, even as I reached her door and knocked. Inside, I could hear the sound of sniffling.

When the door opened, I thought it was Cassidy at first until I looked twice. Instead, it was someone who looked like Cassidy, but this girl was a few years older and had dark brown eyes instead.

“I’m going to go out on a limb here and guess your name is Kevin?” said the girl.

“Really good guess,” I said. My eyes swept into the room, and I could see Cassidy sitting on the floor, her hands together, her head bowed, and tears on her cheeks.

“Hi, I’m Corina,” she said, waving her hand. “Cassidy’s older sister.”

“It’s nice to meet you,” I said. “But I wish it was under better circumstances than this.”

“Me too,” she replied. “Um, I’m going to let you have a few minutes with her alone. I think that would be good for her actually.”

“Thanks,” I said, stepping out of the way while Corina stepped by me. She smiled and closed the door, leaving me alone with Cassidy.

I had to say that my first impression was that I liked Cassidy’s bedroom. It was colored in tones of light blue and white, giving it an airy, comfy feeling that I rather enjoyed. Posters and pictures hung on the wall, especially various pictures of Cassidy and her sister in happier times. I noticed that there weren’t many pictures of her parents, but that wasn’t that surprising to me.

The most noticeable feature about Cassidy's room was her bed. Apart from our earlier musings about how intimacy worked with centaurs, I never really considered how they slept before. This bed put all my questions to rest. The lower half looked like a stall that you walked into. It was full of hay at the bottom, making a comfortable place for her to lay her lower half. For Cassidy's upper torso though, there was a three-sided mattress with rails that was angled by about forty-five degrees. It was kind of ingenious to be honest.

The bed quickly took a backseat though when I sat down next to Cassidy. I could see she was holding something in her hand, a flyer of some sort that immediately caught my attention.

"Hey, Cass," I said quietly, not wanting to immediately dive into the issue. "What do you have there?"

She reached up to wipe her tears before extending the flyer toward me. "An Enchanted Festival flyer."

"A what now?" I asked. "Sorry, I'm still pretty new here. What was that again?"

She sniffled. "I forget that you haven't been here that long. The Enchanted Festival happens once a year. It's a great big celebration where everyone from Dragonmont City participates. There are games, carnivals, big shopping plazas, naval races, and even fireworks. It's a wonderful event. I've always loved it there. I don't know why I grabbed the flyer. Maybe I was just looking for something good to think about after the disaster that was this morning."

"It sounds really nice," I said. "I didn't know that the city did something like that."

Cassidy brightened for a moment. "Oh yeah, definitely. It's a big affair. I'm surprised you haven't heard anything about it. Well, not that surprised. I always seem to look forward to it more than anyone else. My sister likes it, but not as much as I do. My parents . . . well, they don't really. I bet you the other girls probably like it a bit too."

"I bet it's a lot of fun," I said. "Maybe you can go with us? Maybe we'll all take the day off and have fun together, you know?"

Her temporary recovery evaporated. “Probably not.”

“Why not, Cassidy? Talk to me.”

“You probably already know,” she muttered. “I suck. I’m terrible. I never should have tried out as a maid in the first place. Not me and my big ass.”

“You don’t have a big ass, trust me,” I said. “Okay, so yeah, centaurs are going to have a harder time getting around in tight spaces than goblins. Who didn’t see that one coming? But to say you’re not cut out to be a maid is selling yourself short. So you had a bad start to the morning. Who gives a shit? No one expected perfection.”

“I expected to have a hard time, but the way that lady looked at me this morning was awful,” she admitted. “Like I wasn’t even worthy of respect. I thought she was going to tell me I belonged down in the basement stable with the rest of the four-hooved creatures. It was completely de-centaurizing.”

“I haven’t had the best luck with fairies either,” I said, chuckling at the memory of meeting Mrs. Pennington. “As a group of people, they can be very hard to work with. And they always leap to quick judgments. One was supposed to be my guardian when I was first reborn. I called her a raging bitch to her face when she assumed I was going to be her personal servant.”

Cassidy giggled. “Sounds like she deserved it.”

“That’s not including the fact that she fired Paulina right in front of me too,” I replied. “So you’re right—she definitely earned it. Anyway, that’s how Paulina and I met, and the rest is history.”

“Paulina is such a nice person,” said Cassidy, hanging her head. “I hated to see that look in her eyes. That look of disappointment. I don’t want to see that again. I don’t want to go back.”

“I promise you that Paulina is not disappointed,” I said. “In fact, she’s completely scared. She’s afraid that you were scared off. She knows you had a rough day, but that much of it was out of your control.”

Cassidy scoffed. “I could have been more careful. I was *trying* to be careful. And I still broke stuff. She has every right to be mad at me.”

“One thing I’ve learned about Paulina is that she has a big heart, and most of the time, she sees the bigger picture,” I said. “Trust me, she’s more worried about your well-being than anything else.”

Finally, Cassidy relented a little. I saw some of the tension leave her shoulders, and she picked her head up a little higher. “What am I going to do?” she asked. “Do you think I’m fooling myself with all of this? Would I be better suited doing something else?”

I reached over to her desk and grabbed a tissue, offering it to her. “I think you can do anything you want to, but you need to get over your biggest enemy.”

“My big ass?” she asked.

“Your self-confidence. It’s too low for how great a person you are.”

Some red rushed into her cheeks. “I don’t know why you keep saying that.”

I chuckled. “Maybe because it’s true? And I’m going to prove it to you.”

“Really? How are you going to do that?”

“First, by standing up.”

I pushed up to my feet and gestured for her to do the same. Once she was on all four hooves, I grabbed both of her hands, forcing her to look at me.

“Now take a deep breath.”

I closed my eyes and breathed in. I could feel the subtle change in her body as she did what I asked, mostly because of the connection between our hands.

“Feel any better?” I asked.

“Kinda. But I think that’s mostly because you’re here. It’s hard to be upset when I’m around you.”

Holy crap, was Cassidy actually flirting with me? She pursed her lips and lowered her eyes, but it was an unmistakable gesture. Don’t get me wrong—she was no Bridgette, but it was adorable in its simplicity.

I stumbled on my words, but her door opened before anything came out. Corina was back, and she rested her shoulder against the frame.

“Feeling any better, Cass?” she asked.

“Much better,” said Cassidy, giving me a shy smile. “Thanks to you, Corina, and to Kevin here. You know how to pick me up when I’m down.”

To my surprise, Corina gave me a look with a raised eyebrow. I think it was the first time Cassidy had really come to rely on an outsider, someone that wasn’t her sister.

And judging by Corina’s smile, she must have figured out exactly what that meant.

Chapter Eleven

"Oh, thank the spirits!" said Paulina, who rushed forward to hug Cassidy the moment I brought her back to work. "Are you okay? I'm so sorry, Cassidy. I didn't know how bad you were hurting and I should have done more!"

"No, you didn't do anything wrong, I promise," said Cassidy, hugging her back. "It was just a moment of self-doubt. I seem to have a lot of those, if you haven't noticed already."

Paulina winced. "Are you okay now?"

"Thanks to Kevin, much better actually," she said.

Cassidy raised her hand, which just so happened to be entwined with mine. It was something entirely natural that happened while we were walking back to the penthouse, and I couldn't help but notice how much I liked the way that it felt.

There was something incredibly sweet about holding hands with innocent, virginal Cassidy. Something that I truly relished.

"Do you think that you want to get back to it?" asked Paulina. "I have just a couple more places that I need to hit today. I could really use some help if you're up to it?"

Cassidy gave me a long look before turning back to Paulina. "I think I can do it. I want to help if you'll have me?"

Paulina nearly started dancing. She hopped up and down before rushing forward to embrace the other woman.

"Come on," urged Paulina. "I'm going to show just how fun this can really be!"

Cassidy entered the room, and with the situation taken care of, I thought to go back to the duplex to await the end of the day. Paulina had one last token of affection to give to me though.

"Wait a second, handsome," she said, right before she leapt into my arms and wrapped her legs around my waist. Within seconds, her tongue was in my mouth, part of the most passionate kiss I'd received in some time.

When it broke, I could only laugh. “Did you miss me that much? Or just couldn’t wait until I got home?”

“I’m just so happy to have you in my life,” said Paulina with total honesty. “I’d hate to think about what it would be like if I didn’t have you.”

“Luckily for you, you’ll never have to find out,” I said, kissing her return.

Though she didn’t say anything, there was a special look on Paulina’s face that was easy for me to interpret. I didn’t find out until later that evening just how much she appreciated my help, but I can definitely say I enjoyed myself when she was riding me, keeping the whole house awake with her squeaky bed.

When the time came, she begged me to cum inside her so that I could impregnate her (which had become our special kink) and of course, I fulfilled her wish.

I thought that we might have a rocky road for the rest of the week, but it didn’t play out that way. Tuesday was a quiet day, and all three of the new girls came home with smiles on their faces. Well, except for Nikki, but goths really didn’t smile all that much.

The rest of the week had similar results. By Thursday, Paulina felt comfortable enough to put the girls on solo duty with their own penthouses, inspecting their work once they were done. And despite one broken dish on Cassidy’s part, they all did incredibly well.

By the time Friday night came around, we had reason to celebrate. We invited all the new girls to stay over so we could enjoy some wine, pizza, and a little time in the hot tub. Pizza came first, since we were all famished. Nikki managed to get the pizza half off too, which was an added perk. Of course since she was instrumental to getting the pizza, she insisted on saying grace.

“Evil lord Malfiore, we thank you for sustaining us with your nourishment,” she said as we all held hands and tried not to laugh. “We ask that you punish our enemies and continue to give blessed tidings to your servants.”

“I’m a servant of Malfiore now?” Kennedi whispered to me.

“Just until grace is over,” I whispered back.

She giggled but said nothing more.

“In your eternal darkness, we give thanks,” finished Nikki. “Amen.”

“Question?” asked Kennedi, raising one finger. “Which of my enemies will Malfiore be punishing for this grace? Or am I to assume that he gets all of them in one go? How powerful is Malfiore exactly?”

Nikki seemed to be caught off guard and didn’t know how to answer that question. “He’s very powerful! One of the most powerful demon lords there is!”

“So *every* enemy?” Kennedi asked. “Because I have a lot of enemies.”

“What enemies could you possibly have?” asked Sadie.

“Oh, I have droves,” said Kennedi, counting off on her fingers. “Bernicia the troll for stealing my really cool Garbie book bag back in second grade. Chester and Morty Suggendoss because they called me Cat-eyed Kennedi in middle school because of the way my glasses made me look. The entire team of the Racine Red Hawks. Trust me, they know what they did. Enid and Ester from Dwarf Lady Maids, Inc. Oh, and I can’t forget Gary Brooks.”

“Gary Brooks the mayor of Dragonmont City?” asked Paulina. “That Gary Brooks?”

Kennedi nodded somberly. “He banned the sharing of your Gobboflix password. Can you believe that? Now I need to pay twenty opals a month just to have my own account. It’s such bullshit!”

“I can assure you that Malfiore will punish all your enemies,” said a sober-eyed Nikki. “He’ll leave them suffering and wishing for death!”

“That’s so perfect,” replied Kennedi. “Okay, let’s eat!”

With our grace to Malfiore finished, we destroyed our pizzas and helped ourselves to more than a copious amount of wine. By the time we were finished, there wasn’t a sober head in the entire house.

Of course, that meant we were ready to make entirely safe and non-risky decisions.

“Who wants to do shots in the hot tub with me?” asked Sadie as she waved around a bottle of tequila. “Oh, come on, y’all! Live a little!”

“But I didn’t bring a bathing suit,” said Nikki, pulling on the hem of her black t-shirt.

“So what?” replied Sadie. “Either go naked or stay in your underwear. I can assure you that we’ve all seen boobs before anyway. Are you in or are you out?”

Nikki seemed to be in, thanks to the rather festive atmosphere. So too was Bridgette, who wasted no time in ditching her clothes until the only thing that remained was a matching bra and thong set that was cherry red in color.

“Jeez, she’s like a damn model,” protested Kennedi, who for the first time in her life seemed to be upset about her rather large chest. “I wish my proportions were like hers. Or that I could just rock hot underwear like that without any insecurities.”

“Kennedi, you’re hotter than the surface of the sun,” I reassured her. “You have nothing to be ashamed about.”

“You really think I don’t have any insecurities?” asked Bridgette, raising an eyebrow. “Seriously?”

“With how confident you are, it would surprise me if you had any,” grumbled Kennedi.

“I have a lot of insecurities just like everyone else,” said Bridgette. “I’ve just learned how to get over them and not show them. One positive thing that came out of stripping—how to put that part of yourself away and present a brave face.”

“Is that something you think you can teach me?” asked Kennedi.

“What part? The hiding your insecurities or how to strip?”

Kennedi grinned. “Both?”

Bridgette looped her arm through Kennedi’s. “Don’t you worry. I’ll teach you everything I know.”

That was potentially a dangerous combination. Kennedi was pretty irresistible to me right now. What would she be like after learning a few of Bridgette's tricks?

Not surprisingly, my cock liked the idea and lurched in my pants. I could definitely learn to live with that.

The girls all seemed to be convinced about getting in the hot tub, and as a group we made our way up to the rooftop terrace. I made a quick pit stop to change, as did Paulina, but Sadie and Kennedi just stripped off into their underwear and jumped in.

Thank the heavens the tub had seven seats. All four roommates were able to get in with the addition of Cassidy and Nikki, who was only wearing a beige-colored bra and a pair of purple panties underneath.

At that moment, I felt bad for Cassidy. There wasn't much room for a centaur in an empty hot tub to begin with, let alone one that was already full with six people. She didn't seem to mind though. She was happy enough to sit next to the side, swapping jokes with Sadie. Cassidy was also the only one that stayed fully dressed, which wasn't that surprising to me considering her background.

Sitting in a hot tub mostly naked and surrounded by beautiful women felt like a powder keg to me, especially considering I was intimate with most of them.

I was just waiting for someone to make a suggestion that would have kicked off some kind of freaky orgy. For some reason, I kept on looking at Nikki, expecting her to tell us that Malfiore was the patron demon of orgies or something, but when the idea finally came, it didn't come from Nikki.

Not surprisingly, it came from Kennedi.

"Okay, the hot tub is great and all, but I want to have some fun," she said, taking a sip of her wine. "Let's play a game!"

"What kind of game, Ken?" asked Sadie.

"Something raunchy and fun," replied Kennedi, splashing the water. "Something to spice it up a little. I know! Let's play Dirty Truth or Dare!"

“*Dirty* Truth or Dare?” asked Cassidy, nearly choking out the words. “I don’t know about this . . .”

“Oh, come on, it will be fun,” said Kennedi. “Right, Paulina? It could be really fun.”

Paulina was always the voice of reason. She gave Cassidy a reassuring look before answering the question. “Nothing too raunchy though, Kennedi. You need to consider just who you’re asking your questions or giving your dares to. What I mean by that is be gentle with Cassidy.”

That made Cassidy smile, but she still seemed to be a little nervous to play. I reached outside the tub and grabbed her hand, giving it a little squeeze. I was happy when she squeezed back.

“Well, obviously,” replied Kennedi. “No one dare Cassidy to strip naked down the sidewalk. Make your truths and dares appropriate for the person being asked, okay? Let’s get down to business! I’m going to go first!”

“How am I not surprised,” snickered Sadie.

Kennedi heard that little comment and she turned to look at Sadie. “Sadie, truth or dare?”

Sadie shrugged. “Truth, I guess.”

Kennedi grinned. “How many times have you slept with Kevin and another girl?”

“Wow, really diving right into the deep end, aren’t you?” asked Bridgette, giggling.

Sadie didn’t seem to disturbed by the question, even as she raised an eyebrow. “Seriously?”

“Serious as sugarplums,” replied Kennedi. “How many times? Unless you want to forfeit your answer. At which point, you have to do five shots as a consequence.”

Sadie groaned. “Okay, fine then. I’ve had a threeway with Kevin exactly one time. With Kennedi a week ago. Satisfied?”

“I *definitely* was,” added Kennedi, smiling wickedly. “Kevin was too.”

“A threesome?” repeated Cassidy, as if it were the first time in her life that she ever considered such a thing. “Wow.”

“We’re really enlightened here,” replied Kennedi. “I’ve read the *Kama Sutra*. Even submitted a position for them to add too!”

“Okay, my turn,” said Sadie, now turning to face Kennedi. “Truth or dare?”

“Umm, dare,” replied Kennedi, wiggling her eyebrows.

“I dare you to sing Juke Box Hero for all of us right now,” said Sadie, her own smile growing.

Kennedi looked mortified for a split second until she looked over at the bottle of tequila. From that point onward, it didn’t seem so bad that she had to sing.

“Why’s she stalling?” I whispered to Sadie. “We hear her sing all the time.”

“She doesn’t like big groups,” explained Sadie. “She’s okay to sing in the shower or in front of just me or just you, but get her in a group as big as this and she clams up. Didn’t you know that?”

“I guess there are still some things I need to learn about my girls.”

Sadie squeezed my leg as we all turned our attention back to Kennedi. The purple-haired goblin girl seemed to finally summon up the courage and started to belt out the lyrics.

“Standin’ in the rain, with his head hung low! Couldn’t get a ticket, it was a sold-out show!”

It was a little rough to begin with but Kennedi got over her stage fright quickly once we started to sing with her. By the time the song was over, we had cats in the alley that were singing along, but we barely noticed with how loud we were singing and how much fun we were having.

“Not bad, Ken, not bad at all!” cheered Sadie, clapping her hands once she finished.

“What were you talking about not having my confidence?” asked Bridgette, clapping her hands. “I don’t think I could have even done that!”

“What can I say?” asked Kennedi, giggling to herself. “When the music takes me, I just gotta close my eyes and go with it.”

“Okay, Whitney Houston,” said Paulina. “Who’s next to go Truth or Dare?”

“Well, Sadie passed it back to me, so it’s my turn to decide,” said Kennedi, tapping her lip. “So, Paulina, truth or dare?”

Paulina shrugged. “Truth.”

“How many times have you had sex with Kevin?” asked Kennedi.

Paulina giggled. “Too many times to count. You really think I’ve kept track?”

“I keep track of mine!” said Kennedi. “Forty-six times, including the little afternooner that he gave me yesterday when I got home from work.” Kennedi glanced at me and blew me a kiss.

“That’s a lot of sex,” replied Cassidy, who was now looking at me with an expression that I couldn’t really read. Was it interest? It certainly wasn’t disgust.

“You better believe it, sister,” replied Kennedi. “Absolutely heavenly.”

“Malfiore believes that sex is the food of the soul,” added Nikki randomly.

“You know, the more I hear about this Malfiore guy, the more I like him,” said Kennedi. “Maybe you can tell me more about him another time?”

Nikki couldn’t have looked more excited. “I’d love to!”

“Okay, okay, back to topic,” said Paulina. She scanned the crowd. “Okay, Bridgette! Truth or dare!”

Bridgette didn’t even need to think. She picked dare without a second’s delay.

“Umm, I dare you to stand up and . . . smack your ass,” suggested Paulina.

Again, Bridgette didn’t dodder. She stood right up in front of us, turned around to present her ass, and laid a nice, firm smack against her green flesh. I could still see the hand print she left before she turned around.

“More?” asked Bridgette, a mischievous twinkle in her eye.

Paulina didn’t know what to say. “Uh, sure?”

Bridgette smacked her ass three more times before she turned around and sat down. Her eyes were locked on mine, and I had to admit that I liked the way her ass rippled with each smack.

Kennedi leaned in closer to Paulina. “You’re going to have to be more raunchy with a girl like Bridgette. She’s not sweet and virginal in case you haven’t noticed.”

Paulina turned red. “Duly noted.”

Now it was Bridgette’s turn. There were no surprises when she turned to me and asked truth or dare.

I was feeling pretty bold because of the alcohol, so I picked dare.

Bridgette grinned. “I dare you to make out with Nikki.”

Various cheers erupted from the tub as I glanced over at Nikki, who was now looking back at me with a shy smirk. Of all the girls here, she was the one that I thought about kissing the least, but that wasn’t because she wasn’t attractive or anything. She just seemed to have sex the furthest from her mind.

Still, she looked great tonight. She was wearing this silverish eye shadow that really complemented her hair. And now she was licking her lips in anticipation of what was to come.

I didn’t hesitate when I leaned over toward and pressed our lips together. I could feel Kennedi stroking my thigh under the water as Nikki and I kissed, something that really helped to get my engine going.

Nikki’s lips were wonderful. It was almost like they had some heat to them, making my lips feel this slight burning feeling that I really enjoyed. We made out for like a solid thirty seconds before she broke the kiss, looking at me like she wanted a lot more.

“Merciful Malfiore,” she whispered once we were done. “That was really nice.”

“It looked pretty damn nice from over here too,” added Bridgette, who’s hand was now in a rather conspicuous spot between her legs. “*Really* nice.”

Kennedi leaned against Bridgette. “Wait until you sample the whole thing.”

“Believe me, I’m looking forward to it,” replied Bridgette.

“Okay, my turn now,” I said, looking around the tub. I didn’t stop until I settled on Cassidy, who hadn’t really gotten a chance to participate in much just yet. “Cassidy, truth or dare?”

Cassidy looked embarrassed with all attention on her, but she picked a safe truth a moment later.

I wanted to be easy with her but I also wanted to keep the general vibe going as well. So my question was relatively easy.

“What’s the furthest you’ve ever gone with the opposite sex?” I asked.

Cassidy turned rosy red but she didn’t need to think about the question for very long. She managed to squeak out her answer seconds later.

“Well, I kissed another boy before. Back in middle school,” she admitted.

Sadie’s mouth fell open. “What? That’s it? Nothing else?”

Cassidy shrugged. “I mean, I told you guys I wasn’t that experienced.”

“We knew you were a virgin but not that much of a virgin,” said a shocked Kennedi. “I mean there’s a virgin who’s at least watched a game before. Maybe even taken batting practice too. But you’ve never even heard of the damn sport.”

Cassidy continued to look embarrassed. “It’s just never been in the cards for me. It’s not my fault it never happened.”

I was feeling protective of her so I moved closer to her side of the tub and gave her a hug. “There’s nothing at all wrong with that, Cassidy,” I told her quietly. “I like you just the way you are. And you know that I think you’re really special. Who cares whether you’re a virgin?”

It was just what she needed to hear. “Thank you so much,” she said, leaning in to kiss me on the cheek.

It was a nice gesture for me, but for Cassidy, it was a rather bold move—one that was noticed by the other girls.

“She probably won’t be a virgin for long if she continues hanging out around Kevin,” noted Bridgette.

“That’s for sure,” chimed Kennedi.

I didn’t say anything to that directly, but the idea was definitely intriguing. To make matters even better, I could tell that Cassidy was thinking about it too. What I wouldn’t give to be the one to give her her first time?

Maybe if I was lucky, that could definitely be the case.

Chapter Twelve

After Cassidy's question, our form of strip truth or dare entered a period of lull that lasted for a few rounds. Cassidy picked Nikki for her next question, and despite Nikki wanting a dare, Cassidy's challenge was rather timid.

"I dare you to show everyone your tongue!" said Cassidy.

Nikki didn't mind much, sticking out her tongue for all of us to see. It was even a little amusing, especially considering what Cassidy saw as scandalous compared to what the rest of us thought it would be.

Nikki then passed the turn to Paulina, who picked another truth. This time, Nikki asked her what her favorite kink was during sex—and Paulina's answer didn't surprise me.

"Honestly?" replied the dark-haired owner. "I really like the idea of being impregnated. When it's just me and Kevin, I love begging for him to cum in me, hoping that it makes me pregnant. It's the hottest thing about our sex."

"That is really hot, Polly," replied Kennedi. "Maybe I should give that a try sometime?" She then turned toward me and fluttered her eyelashes. "Want to knock me up too, stud? Put your baby in my belly?"

The rest of the girls in the tub started to get in on that too. Even Nikki made a few jokes about it, standing up and showing off her belly and pretending it was rounded off in pregnancy.

I had to admit—the idea was secretly thrilling too. I tried to picture all these women around me with pregnant bellies thanks to me, and I became very hard in my trunks. Why did that turn me on so much?

Paulina then passed her turn to Kennedi, who tried to liven it up a little by picking a dare. Paulina's suggestion of flashing her ass to our neighbors was seemingly right in the spirit of things when she got out of the tub, but seeing as we couldn't actually see her bare ass when she did it kinda took the fun out of it.

Thankfully, you could always count on Kennedi to put the kinkiness back into any topic, which she did when she asked Bridgette to go next.

“Truth or dare, Bridge?” asked Kennedi.

“Just assume I’m always going to say dare,” replied Bridgette. “Trust me, it’s a safe bet.”

“Okay, I dare you to . . . sit on Kevin’s lap,” said Kennedi, her lip curling upward in delight.

Now things were getting interesting again. Kennedi knew something the other girls didn’t, in that her hand was still resting on my thigh. When I became hard at the idea of impregnating them, she had slid her hand over to rest over my cock.

And now that her challenge was uttered, she was now rubbing me over my shorts. I was extremely hard, and Bridgette was going to see just how hard I was the moment she sat down.

The blonde seductress never showed a second of doubt. She made a big show about sauntering over to me. At that point, she turned around, making sure her ass was directly in my face. Lowering her hips, she didn’t stop until my cock was pointing directly upward into the crease between her legs.

“Mmm, that’s nice,” moaned Bridgette once her weight was resting on me. I was grateful for my trunks and Bridgette’s thong, because otherwise I might have penetrated her right then and there. The situation wasn’t helped by the fact that Bridgette laid back against my chest, putting one arm up and behind my head to rub my hair.

“Wow, she looks so sexy doing that,” said Sadie, watching Bridgette squirm in my lap.

Bridgette grinned. “I can give a mean lap dance. Isn’t that right, Kevin?”

“She’s really good,” I sputtered, still feeling my cock pushing up against her nether region. When she began to jerk her hips forward and back, I had to hold on lest I start meeting her humps on my own volition.

Still, nature had a way of taking over when you least expected it. Only about a minute of those bump-and-grind movements had me grabbing Bridgette’s hips and trying to set the pace. I was really getting into it, and

it was beyond obvious that this had become about more than just sitting in my lap.

I was losing self-control, but Bridgette had more of a reserve than I thought. Especially when she reluctantly stood up and returned to her seat, but not before winking at me once she was down.

“Fuck me,” muttered Kennedi. “Can I go next?”

“Which one?” asked Sadie. “Kevin or Bridgette?”

Kennedi giggled. “All of the above?”

Paulina splashed Kennedi, which helped to diffuse some of the tension. But it was hard to deny that I was now primed and ready.

It was a good thing that most of the tamer questions and dares had already been used. From that point forward, we got downright kinky with how we played the game.

Our next round saw Paulina taking a dare from Bridgette, which was a dangerous move. The sultry blonde was clearly turned on when she told her what the dare would be.

“I want you to make out with Sadie for a period of two minutes,” said Bridgette. “I’ll keep a watch on the time.”

Paulina glanced over at Sadie, who now looked back at her with a somewhat coy expression.

“Come to mama,” said Sadie, giggling as she opened her arms and waved her fingers.

Paulina got over her initial shock and slid closer, not stopping until their lips connected. Any attention that was still on Bridgette and me evaporated as all eyes became glued to the two hot goblin girls making out.

It was unique for me to see, mostly because I was used to them eating each other out during the occasional threesomes that we had. What I wasn’t used to was seeing them kiss. That added a nice, erotic feel to the situation that kept my cock at full mast.

Especially when Sadie started moaning into Paulina’s mouth.

I’d never seen a period of two minutes go by as fast as that one did. If it wasn’t for Bridgette checking the time, I would have sworn we’d been gypped on the show.

“I can see why Kevin likes kissing you so much,” said a red-faced Sadie, once they separated. “You have lips to die for, Polly.”

Paulina grinned. “You’re not too bad yourself, Sadie. I really like the way you kiss.”

With physical boundaries being freely crossed, it was only a matter of time until clothing came into play. Paulina hit Kennedi with a dare that saw her lose her top, exposing those mammoth mammaries for my viewing pleasure.

“Wicked demonspawn,” swore Nikki, looking defensive over her much trimmer figure. “Are those real?”

“Magically enhanced,” replied Kennedi, throwing a wink at Paulina at the private joke. “But still 100% beautiful.”

“I’ll second and third that,” I added, unable to look away from the way they stood high and proud on her chest. I loved how erect her nipples became when she was aroused. Like two eraser-sized nubs, Kennedi’s nipples were built for play—and I’d partaken in that pastime one too many times.

Nikki looked down at her smaller boobs in that drenched bra. “I wonder if I should get mine done? Mine don’t look nearly as nice as yours.”

“Why don’t you let me take a peek?” asked Kennedi.

Nikki clammed up and her hold on her breasts became a little tighter. “W-what?”

“I think you should choose dare next, Nikki,” said Kennedi with a wicked grin. “Because it’s your turn.”

Anyone could have seen where this was going. If Nikki chose dare, she was going to be forced to lose the bra. I suspected she was going to play it safe, but it was testament to the atmosphere that night that she picked the wild path.

“Dare,” said Nikki defiantly, moving her hands away from her chest.

“Do I even need to say it?” asked Kennedi. “Or do you know what to do?”

Nikki gulped and nodded, saying nothing as her hands went behind her back. I watched as they jerked before her bra sagged forward, a strap falling over her shoulder. I realized I was holding my breath as Nikki removed the other strap and finally pulled it away.

Cheers erupted from the rest of the girls (even Cassidy!) as Nikki’s breasts were exposed for the first time. They were definitely on the small side, more akin to Bridgette’s although without the sculpted factor that came from so much time spent inside the gym. They weren’t mounds as much as they were hills with a gentle slope, with just enough definition to mark them as breasts with nothing more.

She had these tiny nipples with even tinier areolas around them. Even though they weren’t anywhere near as large as Kennedi’s or Sadie’s, I still found myself incredibly attracted to them. I even wondered how they would feel in my hands.

“Can I give my professional opinion?” asked Kennedi after seeing Nikki’s chest.

“Professional?” giggled Sadie. “What professional are you?”

“I’ve had boobs my entire life,” said Kennedi defensively. “I think that qualifies me as a professional.”

Paulina, Sadie, and even Cassidy snorted at the same time.

“All I’m saying is that you have a lovely pair of tits,” said Kennedi, before glancing at me. “I bet you even Kevin agrees?”

“A thousand percent,” I said, nodding at Nikki as a strange gleam appeared in her eyes. “Beautiful chest. Nothing to be ashamed of.”

It wasn’t hard to tell that her small chest was a sign of insecurity in Nikki. Our flowing compliments helped Nikki come out of her shell a little more —a true win-win all things considered.

“I can give a professional opinion, unlike my friend here,” said Bridgette. “I’ve seen boobs of all sizes belonging to my stripper friends. The most successful girls I know had smaller chests. Honestly, the girl I knew that made the most money only had A-cups.”

“Really?” said Nikki, as all shades of modesty disappeared. “That’s amazing!”

I smiled at Bridgette for what she said, and she flashed me a coy grin in return. Who knew that a game of strip truth or dare could be so good for us as a group?

The dares seemed to get raunchier from there. It was like an unspoken rule now that playing the game meant only taking dares. The next three involved Cassidy taking off her shirt, which was a surprisingly easy gesture for her all things considered. She had on this plain white bra that was both adorable and sexy at the same time. After that, Cassidy dared Sadie to lose her bra too, which came off easily. Sadie then had Kennedi get totally naked, even wagging her butt in my face for good measure.

I knew the game was going to come back around to me at one point, and Kennedi certainly didn’t disappoint.

“Okay, Kevin, it's your turn,” she said, not even bothering to ask me if I wanted to choose truth or dare. “I dare you to stand up and show all of us that beautiful, magnificent cock of yours.”

There were various reactions from the girls around me upon hearing the dare. Cassidy was the only one that truly gasped, most likely from her own modesty. Nikki squirmed in her seat, but I could tell she was anxious to see what I was really packing. The other girls had all seen me before, and they were eagerly awaiting the show.

I stood up, finding that my trunks were indented with the size of my erection already. I made a little show of taking them off, trying to put on my best stripper tease (though I think it was clear I would need some lessons from Bridgette if I ever wanted to go prime time). Finally, I yanked them down and tossed them over the side of the hot tub.

All the girls cheered once I was naked, the loudest cheers coming from Kennedi, Sadie, and Bridgette. Paulina looked very horny, and I could tell she wanted to get laid more than anything else. The other new girls had the most curious reactions.

“Merciful Malfiore,” whispered Nikki, seemingly entranced by my manhood. “Now that’s a big, thick cock!”

“Isn’t it perfect?” replied Kennedi, taking the moment to slide forward to wrap her hand around it. “I mean, it doesn’t get much better than this. Virile, strong, and always ready for action. It’s the most perfect cock in existence.”

“You can say that again,” muttered Paulina.

When I glanced over at Cassidy, I could tell she was trying her hardest not to stare. She was also embarrassed by that fact, but it was obvious to me that she was very interested in what she saw.

“Seems such a shame that we just let it go to waste,” said Sadie, once I sat down. “I mean here Kevin is completely hard and not a single one of us is trying to take advantage of that.”

“Well, we can fix that right now,” said Paulina as she stared at me. “Kevin, can you hit me with a dare please?”

I knew exactly what she wanted. And at this point in the game, I was so turned on that I needed some relief.

“Truth or dare, Paulina?” I asked, even as she started to move closer to me.

“Double dare,” she said, gesturing for me to stand up again.

I did so willing, letting my cock emerge from the water like a whale breaching the surface. Beads of water fell off the tip before Paulina got the chance to wrap her hands around it. But once she did, I found the source of pleasure I’d been seeking.

“Way to go, Polly,” said Kennedi, cheering from her side of the tub as Paulina jerked my cock. She then turned to look at Bridgette. “Those are my two favorite people in the whole world right there.”

“I can see why,” said Bridgette, whose hand was now between her thighs as she watched Paulina attend to me. “She looks very talented.”

“Wait until you see what she does next.”

Kennedi’s words triggered Paulina to go beyond just a simple tug job. Before I knew it, her pink lips had separated and she was pushing me inside her mouth.

“Mmm, fuck, Paulina,” I groaned once the tip tickled her tonsils. “Take it all, baby.”

She moaned around my cock, keeping a tight suction around the entire length until she pulled all the way back to the tip. My entire shaft was now coated with her saliva, making it easy for her to slide forward again, deepthroating me once more.

We were now all enthralled watching her go. Even Cassidy was watching it like it was something she’d never seen before, which in all honesty, was probably the case. Nikki was rubbing between her legs, and I could see fingers pinching at Sadie’s nipples.

I just couldn’t tell who the fingers belonged to.

I could hear sounds of slurping from Paulina as she deepthroated my cock, moving with a quick pace as she bobbed. I was so turned on that I didn’t know if I could stop even if I wanted to, but I knew that it wouldn’t be long until I came.

I just had to hold out for as long as possible to enjoy Paulina’s wickedly tight mouth. In any other circumstance, I might have made for a better showing.

Tonight though? I just needed that sweet release. When I came, I felt Paulina increase the suction around my shaft, preventing even a single drop of my seed from leaving her experienced mouth. She continued to swallow until she got it all, never once thinking to stop until my cock was completely drained.

“And that boys and girls is how you take care of your man,” announced Kennedi, flashing a thumbs-up at her best friend.

Paulina placed one last kiss against the tip before moving away, looking like a gold medal winner at the Olympics by the time she took her seat. I couldn’t have been more drained, but judging by the looks on the faces of Kennedi, Sadie, and Bridgette, my night had just begun.

It might have gotten raunchier still had we not embarrassed our sweet, virginal Cassidy. She’d been a good sport up until this point in the game, but it was clear that seeing her new bosses engage in oral sex right in front of her had been one provocation too far.

“I think that’s enough for me tonight,” she said, putting her shirt back on. “Before things get any wilder.”

“Oh crap,” said Paulina, suddenly feeling defensive and embarrassed. “I’m sorry, Cassidy. We shouldn’t have done that around you.”

“It’s okay, but I just need a little more time before I can really let loose with all of you,” she explained, when we tried to do damage control. “This was a lot for me to take in for one night.”

“Duly noted,” replied Kennedi. “In fact, a new rule for all of us. No orgies in front of Cassidy. We need to treat her with respect.”

“That’s not what I said,” said Cassidy, giggling. “I mean you just need to go a little slower with me. I was barely ready to watch Kevin get a blow job, but here we are. Just need to move at my pace, okay?”

“We just need to be more mindful of Cassidy’s experience level,” I said, earning a thankful smile from her. “We don’t need to be nuns.”

“Hmm, nuns,” muttered Kennedi, tapping her lips. “That could be a hot roleplay. Kevin, why don’t you be a priest and we can all be nuns?”

“Okay, bedtime for me,” announced Cassidy.

It was a convenient time for all of us to end the game and the night. The alcohol had run out, and we had reached a fitting climax when I came in Paulina’s mouth.

As a group, we decided to get some sleep. All the new girls decided to sleep over since we’d been drinking, which made for some complex sleeping arrangements involving the couches in the living room. I let Cassidy have my room, especially once she proclaimed that she could sleep on the floor quite easily. I suspected I was going to sleep in someone else’s bed, but I never suspected just who that girl would be until after I had brushed my teeth and plugged my phone into the charger.

I moved through the now quiet living room only to find Nikki already passed out and snoring, but the other couch was conspicuously empty.

It didn’t take me long to find out why. I found Bridgette standing right in the middle of the living room, not a stitch of clothing on her incredible, athletic body.

I was glad I wasn't holding anything, because I certainly would have dropped it. I could only stare back at the beauty in front of me, especially that triangle of smooth skin between her legs, without a stitch of hair to cover it. It made Bridgette's lips stand out clearly, and I could only imagine that they were wet and ready for action.

I thought I was out of commission because of Paulina's blow job, but to my stunning surprise, I could feel blood rushing into my cock again.

"I thought I was never going to get you alone," purred Bridgette, using her hand to touch her breast before sliding it down her tummy. "I was hoping I'd get my turn in the hot tub, but the game ended before we got a chance to do more than just dry hump."

The memory of Bridgette riding me added more thickness to my cock. She took a single step closer to me, followed by another, and then another still. Walking like she owned the runway, Bridgette closed the distance between us until her hand landed directly on my briefs.

"The game might have been over for Cassidy, but it was just beginning for me," she whispered.

"You really want to do this?" I asked, feeling my cock throb under her experienced hand.

Bridgette kept her eyes trained on me as she nodded slowly. "Ever since that day in the shower, I've wanted this. I thought about slipping off my bottoms in the tub and just putting you inside me, but I thought there would be time after for more fun. Well, that time is now."

She didn't give me much of a chance to react. Bridgette hooked her thumbs in my briefs and yanked them down quickly. She didn't spare a glance at my cock. In fact, her eyes stayed locked on mine as she guided me to the couch. The only thing I could hear was Nikki's gentle snoring, and I wondered if the dark elf had any idea what was about to happen mere feet from her.

Once my butt hit the couch, I kicked off my briefs and awaited Bridgette's next move. She backed her ass closer to my face and then leaned all the way forward, running her hands down her smooth legs.

In the process, I watched as her ass parted for me, exposing a drenched pussy and a tiny winking star just above it.

“Holy fuck,” I muttered, staring at her utter perfection.

Bridgette let out a throaty giggle as she snapped upward. “That’s the idea, isn’t it?”

She backed up further still as her hand reached for my cock. Lowering her hips, she didn’t stop until the tip kissed her drenched opening. Soon, it swallowed it whole.

“Fuck yes!” she moaned, tossing her blonde hair back and looking back at me from across her shoulder. “Put that big fucking cock in my tight little pussy.”

I reached over, putting a hand on each cheek. I gripped them hard, using them to pull down on my cock. Bridgette let out a hiss of approval as her pussy swallowed more of me, now down about halfway on my shaft.

“Fill me,” she chanted. “*Fucking* fill me. Give it all to me. Give me that perfect cock!”

I kept pulling her downward until her ass met my lap. In the process, she’d gobbled up my entire length, now resting snugly in her delightfully tight pussy.

I didn’t know how the hot tub interaction with us could have been any better until now. Having this sexy vixen in my lap even without having sex was still a highlight of my life, but now that I was buried inside her pussy, I could barely see straight.

All I could focus on was the feel of her skin against mine. That hot, sweaty feeling that was accompanied by the wetness of her sex gently squeezing my shaft as she rocked in my lap. Soon I was operating on instinct alone.

I had to fuck Bridgette until both of us came. My body, my brain, my *instinct* demanded it.

I heard Bridgette let out a throaty giggle as she raised her hips until she was just holding the tip of my shaft inside her. Her juices coated my cock in a thin, milky foam before she sat down again, swallowing me whole.

“You have no idea how good that feels,” she purred. “Mmm, nice, hard, *thick* cock. Fills me in ways that I . . . oh yes . . . never felt before.”

She leaned all the way back the next time she took me deep, resting her back against my bare chest. This time, she grabbed my hands and put them on her tits. I found her erect nipples just awaiting my attention, letting me knead them as our hips grinded together.

She turned her head slightly. “Do you like my body, baby?”

I could swear her pussy squeezed my shaft as she asked the question. I grunted my approval in her ear.

Bridgette grinned wickedly. “You want to cum so deep in my body, don’t you? You’ve been thinking about it since the day we met? Since that first time in the gazebo, haven’t you?”

I couldn’t help myself. My cock lurched inside her pussy, answering her question without words.

Bridgette giggled. “There’s my answer. I’ve been thinking about it too. I thought having just a taste of you that day in the bathroom would sate me, but do you want to know something? It made me even hungrier. I needed to get you inside me and see just how *fucking* good it could be.”

With those words, Bridgette sat up abruptly and turned around so I could see her face. She lifted one leg onto the couch and then another, standing over me tall and proud until she squatted back down on my cock. This time, I helped her get the alignment just right, allowing my dick to slip back into her warm, wet hole.

“And you want to know something?” asked Bridgette, now looking directly in my eyes.

“Uh huh,” I grunted, meeting her strokes with mine.

“It’s even better than I thought it would be,” replied Bridgette.

Up until this point, I knew Bridgette was putting on a show, and I really respected her talent. This girl was born to fuck, and her body just screamed it from the highest rooftops. Her pace had been fast and measured, but as soon as the words were out, she just let loose.

Her hips started working incredibly hard now, dropping her ass on my cock at an amazingly fast pace. It took real skill to move that fast and still fuck my entire length, but she managed to raise herself to just the tip before she came crashing down once more.

My entire body was tingling at the sensation of being fucked so thoroughly. Seeing Bridgette's exquisite face watching me only added to the feeling, ensuring that I wasn't going to last long. In hindsight, I was thankful for cumming in the hot tub because it let me last longer than I would have otherwise under such an onslaught.

And yet, even being drained less than an hour ago didn't have much of an effect after ten more minutes. That was when I grabbed her ass with both hands and gripped her hard, spewing cum inside her greedy pussy while she coaxed me for more.

"That's it," she cooed, pawing at my chest like a cat. "Give me all that cum. Fill my tight little hole with your seed, Kevin. Oh fuck, I can feel it. Spurting inside me. Filling me with your cum. There's so *much*. How do you have that much cum in my tight little pussy, Kevin?"

Eventually, Bridgette leaned down to kiss me, giving me one that was incredibly passionate before she lifted her hips off my cock. We both looked down to watch as my cum dripped out of her pussy, landing on my shaft unceremoniously.

"Good thing we have a maid nearby," she whispered to me, sending a shiver down my spine.

Bridgette dropped between my legs and polished my cock until it was sparkling clean, or until all the cum had disappeared. When she was finished, she couldn't have looked more pleased with herself.

"That was incredible," I said, standing upright and finding that my legs felt like jelly. "I have no other words than that. Just wow."

Bridgette threw her arms around me and hugged me tight. "I'm so glad we got that over with. But I think you just woke up the beast inside me."

I raised an eyebrow. "What do you mean by that?"

She used her finger to trace a line around my nipple. “I mean that now that I’ve had one taste, I’m going to want more. You better start taking vitamins if you don’t already. I’m going to keep your balls completely drained moving forward.”

“You might want to check with the other girls,” I joked. “They like to have sex too.”

Bridgette said something next that let me know that she was a keeper.

“Oh, don’t worry,” she said. “I like to share too.”

Could life possibly get any better?

Chapter Thirteen

We all slept in the next day, mostly because we were fucked out and hungover. I didn't stir until 10:30, and I was one of the first to wake up, finding a mostly quiet house. I decided to take a shower to get the smell of sex off me, and when I left the bathroom, I found two girls wide awake.

Paulina and Cassidy were already there, and for some strange reason, they were both fully dressed and looking like they were ready to leave. How did that happen so fast?"

"Uh, what's going on?" I asked them, eyeing each woman cautiously.

"Did you forget what today is?" asked Cassidy with excitement.

Her sudden happiness reminded me just what was going on this weekend.

"The Enchanted Festival!" I said, remembering the flyer. "Oh yeah, did you want to go?"

Both women laughed.

"Duh, silly!" said Paulina. "I didn't get a chance to go last year because we were working so much, but I really want to go this year. When Cassidy told me how much she loves it, I thought we could make a day out of it."

"And there's just so much to do!" said Cassidy, waving her flyer in front of me. "If we hurry, we can make the Battle Arena for the Witch Showdown!"

"Witch Showdown?" I repeated. "What's that?"

Cassidy hooked her arm in mine. "Come on. You still have a lot to learn about Dragonmont City!"

"Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to today's main event! I hope you're ready for a showdown today because our witches are nasty, angry, and ready to fight! Welcome to Witch Showdown!"

It was the damnedest thing I'd ever seen. Cassidy's description of the Witch Showdown didn't do it justice, especially now that I was here ready

to witness the whole thing with the girls. I found myself standing in one of those arenas that looked like it was better suited to a gladiatorial contest. The arena was circular with stands that rose upward from the middle, allowing at least ten or fifteen thousand creatures to sit side by side. In the middle was a pit of sand, which had been empty for the last fifteen minutes but was now starting to fill up with two distinct groups of women on either end.

“How is this the first time I’m hearing about this?” I asked Paulina, sitting right next to me. “Witch Showdown? Seriously?”

Paulina giggled and hugged my arm. “Sorry. Sometimes I forget just how much of the city you don’t know about. The Witch Showdown always occurs on the first day of the Enchanted Festival, and it’s always one of the main events. It’s really great fun watching them compete, especially once the spells start flying.”

“So it’s just witches squaring off against each other with spells and stuff?” I asked. “Do they turn each other to toads or something?”

Cassidy, who was on my other side, laughed and shook her head. “No, no, no. It’s *much* cooler than that. Do you think this kind of crowd would be drawn just from people watching them turn each other into frogs? No, they’ll cast spells at each other, and try to defend against them too. It helps that there’s teams of witches that go against each other.”

“And some members of each team focus exclusively on offense while others focus on defense,” added Paulina.

“Oh, so it’s just like football,” I said, speaking just a little too soon.

Both Paulina and Cassidy just stared back at me. “Football? What’s that?”

“Erm, never mind,” I replied. “I get the gist of it. So when does it start?”

I received my answer in the form of an announcer, who sounded like he could have been the troll brother of John Madden. His name was Bruce Matchstick, and he sounded like a definite doppelganger of the legendary announcer.

“Well folks, welcome to a truly magical showdown today!” said Bruce, his voice echoing throughout the stadium. “We've got an epic battle between

two teams of witches that will blow your broomsticks right off! I'm Bruce Matchstick, and I'm joined by my trusty head-bashing co-commentator, Oscar the Ogre. How are you doing today, Oscar?"

The other commentator's voice was much smoother and less nasally. "Just fantastic, Bruce. Today's battle promises to be a spellbinding showdown, and I'm looking forward to seeing some fantastic magic in action."

"You said it, Oscar! Let's get right into the action!"

"Wow, those two are good," I told Cassidy.

"Oh yeah, definitely," she replied. "Bruce used to coach a team of witches before retiring to do commentary. One of the best coaches out there."

I raised my eyebrow. Okay, that seemed just a little too ironic. Even still, I paid attention while Bruce announced the two teams of witches gathering in front of us.

"Okay, folks, let's meet our witches! First up, we've got the Bakerstown Brooms in their trademark black robes and pointed hats. They really have a great reputation for brewing up some fierce spells, don't they, Oscar?"

"You bet, Bruce," replied Oscar. "They're known for their powerful spells and exceptional potion skills. A real powerhouse team on our hands here."

"They're the favorites to win," Cassidy told me. "They win most years, as you can probably tell by the crowd's reception."

Indeed, their side of the stadium really went wild with praise as the witches threw up their hands and broomsticks in acknowledgment. I even saw one witch cast a spell that highlighted the word "Bakerstown" in the air above the arena.

"They're going to have formidable opponents today, Oscar," continued Bruce. "On the other side, we have the Cursed Coven. Now these witches haven't been a team for all that long."

"Right you are, Bruce. The Cursed Coven was only formed two years ago, and they haven't had a great record on offense. Their head coach tells me things will be different this year with the addition of Wanda the Wicked, a witch with powerful curses at her disposal."

“I hope that’s the case for them, because they’re going to need some serious luck if they want to disrupt Bakerstown’s winning streak. Oh, it looks like they’re ready to begin!”

“It’s about to start!” said Paulina next to me. “Watch this! You’re going to love it.”

Both groups of witches now moved toward the center as all supporting staff left the arena. One single official stood in the middle of the arena, holding a green and black checkered flag completely vertically in the air. The witches moved closer and assumed some kind of defensive stance until the official lowered the flag suddenly and practically ran off the field.

“Why is he running?” I asked Cassidy.

“Because otherwise he’s going to get hit,” said Cassidy. “Watch closely.”

She couldn’t have been more right. If the official hadn’t been running, he would have gotten pulverized with the first spell, launched by the Bakerstown witches against their opponents.

“Oh, it's the Flaming Inferno spell!” announced Bruce Matchstick. “I haven’t seen anything like it in years! And certainly not for an opening move!”

“It looks like the Cursed Coven’s bad luck hasn’t run out just yet, Bruce,” said Oscar. “But wait, the Coven is countering with a Nightshade curse, led by Wanda the Wicked.”

“Look at that, folks!” said Bruce. “A swirling cloud of dark energy is now forming in the middle of the arena.”

Sure enough, I could no longer see the Cursed Coven as they were completely surrounded by their own spell. I suspected it was some kind of defensive play, but I was surprised when the fiery blaze launched by the Bakerstown witches seemed to extinguish even without contact with the dark energy.

“Clever strategy,” said Cassidy. “Bakerstown is known for their high-powered offense. So much so that they typically don’t need to rely on

defense. If the Cursed Coven can just hold them on defense enough to strike back, we might see an upset today."

"You know this pretty well," I teased her. "Maybe you should be the one up in the commentary box?"

Cassidy grinned. "I really love my Witch Showdowns."

The entire arena suddenly erupted with a shocked reaction as Wanda the Wicked cast another spell, this time erupting out of the cloud of dark energy and striking at the main offensive juggernaut of the Bakerstown team.

"Will you look at that, folks!" announced Bruce. "Wanda the Wicked just took out Patty the Potion Master. In all my years, I've never seen the Bakerstown squad put on the defensive so quickly!"

"That's a huge move," said Cassidy. "Patty is the most important player on their team. Without her, they're going to be in serious trouble."

Indeed, Bakerstown now looked to be in deep waters. The remaining witches were trying to coordinate a defense against Wanda's latest spell, but they looked disjointed, almost as if they never expected a scenario where their lead witch got taken out so soon.

"Will they be able to recover?" I asked Cassidy.

Cassidy shrugged. "It's not looking good for them."

Suddenly, two of the witches from the Bakerstown squad went flying into the air without their brooms. I had to crane my head upward just to catch the movement before they were abruptly dropped into the sand. Neither of them were moving after the drop.

"Wow, now that's what I call a fall from grace!" said Bruce. "This Bakerstown squad is being slaughtered out there, and so far, they haven't figured out any way to counter the Coven's attacks."

"We might be seeing a changing of the guard today, Bruce," said Oscar. "Especially if Bakerstown can't find a way to answer the Coven's attacks."

There was an attempt by the Bakerstown squad to regain the initiative by striking at the witches on the wings of the Coven, but there wasn't anything they could do to counter the thick defense being maintained by

Wanda the Wicked. No matter what they did, they were still at the mercy of the Coven, and when their numbers dropped even further, the writing seemed to be on the wall.

“Another witch is down!” announced Bruce. “Folks, I think this is the beginning of the end for Bakerstown. I’ve never seen a team come back from this kind of beat-down.”

Sure enough, the last four witches on the Bakerstown squad soon threw down any wands or brooms they had and fell to their knees in front of the Coven. Upon seeing this, the arena went wild with noise, both at the sight of the upset and from the Bakerstown fans moaning their displeasure.

“Do you believe in miracles, folks?” asked Bruce. “The Bakerstown Brooms have been humbled for the first time in nearly seven years!”

“Time for a couple rebuilding years for them, Bruce,” replied Oscar. “I don’t think there’s a single team out there that can stop the Coven. A simply incredible display of magical talent and skill!”

Cassidy looked at me with excitement. “What do you think? Your first Witch Showdown and you even got to see a great upset! This kind of stuff just doesn’t happen by accident!”

“I’m glad I got the chance to enjoy it with the people that I like the most,” I told her with full honesty.

Cassidy’s smile grew wider and her hand found mine, giving it a little squeeze. I still didn’t know how I felt about Witch Showdowns, but I had to admit that I liked being the one to put that smile on her face.

Next to me Paulina was grinning too from watching the upset, and the other girls were cheering for the Coven as they performed their victory lap around the arena. We stayed for three more matches, mostly involving other lesser known witch teams, but none of them contained the same majesty as that first match between Bakerstown and the Coven.

With the Witch Showdowns nearly over, we left the arena with most of the other creatures of the city, naturally making our way over to the next big event, which was the Troll Marathon. This was something that I found not quite as interesting as the Showdown. For one, I’d never been that interested in marathons or running for that matter, and watching gangs of

trolls smacking their big feet off the pavement in the middle of the city wasn't that entertaining for me.

But it did give me time to talk to the girls, which I found far more entertaining. And the one girl I got to talk to the most during this time was Bridgette, who happened to be standing right next to me during the marathon.

Bridgette was still a mystery to me. Of the three new girls, she was the only one that I'd gone all the way with, but she was also the one that I felt like I knew the least. Don't get me wrong—I loved when she turned on that seductive gaze and became this hyper-sexual goddess, but I still didn't feel like I knew the real Bridgette.

And there was just no time like the present.

"You're not watching much of the marathon?" she asked me, once she found my attention had been diverted.

"Meh, not as interesting as the witches," I replied. "The other girls like it, so that's why I'm here, but I'm kinda just wondering what's coming up next."

Bridgette laughed. "I've never figured out why people like trolls so much. If it were up to me, we'd just skip it, get something to eat, and then head over to the open-air market for a little shopping."

"I'm with you on that one," I replied. "I could use some more clothes. So did you use to go to the Enchanted Festival a lot when you were younger? It seems like Cassidy and Paulina were really into it."

Bridgette pursed her lips and shook her head. "Not really. I didn't go for the first time until after I was an adult."

"Really? Why is that?"

"I didn't have the best home life growing up," she admitted, showing me a flash of the real Bridgette that I hadn't seen yet. "You can say that I had a tough time when I was younger. Parents weren't really around that much and when they were around they weren't very invested. It didn't lead to a lot of family outings."

“Sorry to hear that,” I said, touching her back. “I know a little about absentee families too. At least the one I had before I was reborn.”

“I had a feeling about that when we met,” she said. “It’s almost like a sixth sense. You’re drawn to people that are like you, at least I’ve found that to be the case. You just find that you understand someone a lot better, even after you just met them.”

“Is that how we ended up in bed together so fast?” I joked.

Bridgette giggled. “I’ve always moved fast. That’s just who I am. And growing up poor and without many resources definitely teaches you how to take care of yourself. I should have been in school at the time when I was paying for my own place, but that’s just how my life worked out. And you know what? I wouldn’t trade it for anything else.”

“I think it’s definitely made you strong,” I said. “Having to rely on yourself has a tendency to either break you or make you much stronger. I’m glad it was the latter for you.”

Bridgette smiled and bumped into me with her shoulder, an intimate gesture I assumed. “I have to admit that stripping helped me with that too. I learned how to own my body and how to be comfortable with myself. I also learned how to be seductive and how to go after what I want. As you might have noticed, I’ve used those skills very recently.”

“I might have picked up on that,” I said, chuckling. “It was unlike most experiences I’ve ever had.”

“But a good one still?” she asked.

“Oh, fuck yes,” I replied quickly, making her giggle. “You’re a sexual goddess, Bridgette. I wouldn’t have traded that intimacy for anything. But as much as I enjoyed our sex, I’m really enjoying just getting to know you a little.”

That seemed to confuse her a little, and I saw her give me a strange look in return. “What do you mean?”

“I mean you’re more than just a sultry pair of eyes and a rocking body,” I said. “I want to understand what makes you, you. I want to see this real Bridgette behind the one that can make me cum in ten seconds.”

“I can make you cum a lot quicker than that,” she said, giving me a heated look that removed any doubt.

“I don’t want you to put it to the test,” I said jokingly. “Listen, all I’m trying to say is I like talking with you. I like understanding things about your life and your past. Honestly, I think it’s going to make our sex better.”

I was surprised when Bridgette leaned in to kiss me. It wasn’t a heated, passionate kiss like I was used to from her. In fact, it was surprisingly gentle and loving.

“What was that for?” I asked her, once she pulled away.

Bridgette shrugged. “I just felt like I wanted to kiss you. And to show you that I’m not just some robotic seductress. I have feelings too, and I didn’t just have sex with you because I’m some kind of cock-obsessed goblin girl.”

“That played a part though, right?”

Bridgette laughed. “Okay, maybe a little. I just had this feeling that you were going to be important to me, so I let loose. And now we’re on the other side, after having mind-blowing sex, and we’re getting to know each other a little more. The more I talk to you, the more I want to know, so I think we’re on the right track.”

“It’s just that people usually get to know each other first and then have sex,” I joked.

“I’ve always done things my own way.”

“I’m beginning to see that.”

Honestly, it was equal parts refreshing and nice to have an open conversation with Bridgette that wasn’t laden with innuendos. I think she fell into that role almost too naturally from her stripping days, and so it took a little extra work to bring down her defenses to see the real her. Once I did though, I was amazed by Bridgette’s depth.

It opened up a whole new side to her that I was thrilled to see, and it made me just as excited for the future with her as I was with the other girls.

The Troll Marathon stretched all the way past the lunch hour. By the time we were leaving, our stomachs were rumbling, so we stopped at a local

food truck to buy some famous Hydra Hot Dogs. Okay, so they weren't made *of* hydras, since that would be unsanitary. They were made *by* hydras, and they were piled high with condiments that I wouldn't typically associate with hot dogs.

"I'm not sure about this," I said, looking at the hints of oregano, broccoli, and french fries inside my actual bun. There was also something with a vaguely yellow color that was used as sauce on top, but it definitely wasn't mustard. "These are really that famous?"

"Trust me, I wouldn't steer you wrong," promised Kennedi, already halfway finished with hers.

I should have given her the benefit of the doubt. It was incredible—the sauce that sat on top of the hot dog bound all the other ingredients together so that my mouth was full of flavor.

"Okay, I need another one of those!" I said, devouring my first hot dog, much to the amusement of the girls.

"See?" said Kennedi, finishing her first. "I told you that you'd be a convert."

"Clearly, I need to listen to you more."

She smiled sweetly. "I've been saying that all along, silly."

Chapter Fourteen

I STILL THINK that it was a marvel of physics that I was able to down twelve hot dogs without any problem. Part of me didn't even realize that twelve was the number, but Sadie had been keeping count—mostly out of her own amusement.

"I'm dead serious!" she said, covering her mouth as she laughed. "Twelve hot dogs! I'm not lying!"

"I don't even understand how there's that much room in my stomach for twelve, let alone five," I said, patting my stomach for emphasis. Not that it was bulging, but it just didn't feel like there was that much room in there.

"Twelve hot dogs? That's it?" said Kennedi, blowing a raspberry. "I've done better. One year, I ate twenty-one hot dogs like it was nothing."

"Okay, that's got to be some kind of record," I said.

Kennedi shrugged. "Nah, not really. The hot dog eating contests here routinely run up to triple digits. Now that's really bringing your A-game."

Triple digits just flat out boggled my mind. I had to surrender what I knew about physics in this fantastical world.

Either way, I was more than sated walking around with a stomach full of hot dogs, especially as we came upon what was sure to be the highlight of the day for the girls.

"The market!" shrieked Kennedi and Bridgette at the same time.

I lost sight of them within seconds, disappearing into the thick crowd of other magical creatures all out to get the best deal. Not that I could blame them. From the little I could see right at the entrance, there seemed to be something for everyone here. A mustached troll vendor caught my eye right away, selling these really neat-looking demon-hide boots for what appeared to be a very cheap price. I saw a trio of mermaids selling seaweed, which was advertised as a weight-loss supplement (though like the hot dogs, I had no idea how that worked).

I even saw tiny gnomes walking around, trying to sling tickets to the hydra races that would be taking place later in the evening. That looked like a

great steal, and of course I purchased seven tickets so we could all go.

“So where are my seats?” I asked the gnome, after he handed me an official looking slip that didn’t have any seating information.

“Pick your own seats, bub,” grunted the gnome. “That stub just gets you into the stands. You’re on your own from there. Get there early.”

He walked away before I had the chance to ask more questions. I kinda felt like I’d just been scammed, but at least the tickets weren’t that expensive to begin with.

Now I just had to find the rest of the girls. We’d all split up shortly after entering the market, and it wasn’t readily apparent where they all went. The market spanned an area that was equivalent to several city blocks, so I knew finding them wouldn’t be the easiest task.

Still, we had no place we needed to be. I was content to let the girls shop and catch up with them later. It just so happened though that I ran into Cassidy first. Once she saw me, she waved and hurried to close the distance.

“Hey stranger,” she said, wrapping her arm around mine. “Fancy seeing you here?”

“I know, right? It’s almost like we didn’t come here together. Imagine that!”

Cassidy laughed and we started moving through the vendor stalls. I had to admit—based on last weekend’s interaction with her, it was great to see her smiling. Not that I thought she was some kind of tragic figure, but if anyone deserved to smile, it was Cassidy.

I was also glad that we hadn’t spooked her off after last night’s hot tub debauchery. We hadn’t discussed it yet, but I wanted to make sure that she didn’t think we were a bunch of deviants.

“So now that we’re alone, I wanted to ask you something,” I said, dodging a very chatty pair of dwarf saleswomen that were pitching scarves. “About last night . . .”

Cassidy waved her hand. “Oh, I’m fine, I promise you! I know I’m not the most experienced girl out there, but you don’t need to moderate yourselves

just for my sake. I can handle it."

"That's not exactly what I'm getting at," I replied. "I didn't want you to think we're a bunch of sex-crazed deviants or something. If I'm being blunt, it's not every day you get to see one of your bosses giving the other a blow job."

Cassidy turned bright red but she didn't look away. "No, you're right about that. But if we're still being blunt, I kinda . . . liked it."

My eyebrow shot up. "Oh really?"

"I've never seen that before," she admitted. "You know, in person. I mean apart from porn. Oh my gosh, I can't believe I just said that out loud."

She covered her face with her hands, but her reaction was so adorable that I couldn't help but try to pull her hands away.

"You're hardly the first person to watch porn," I said, trying to make her more comfortable. "Everyone's done it, myself included."

"It's just there's things I shouldn't say out loud," she said, wincing as she looked at me. "I don't want you to get the wrong impression about me."

"My impression of you is a great one. In fact, if there's anyone that I want to see open up a little more, it's you. I want to see you happy, Cassidy. You deserve it."

She was still blushing but this time it didn't seem to be out of sexual embarrassment.

"Why are you so good to me?" she asked. "Why are you so good to the other girls? Everyone loves you. No one has a bad thing to say about you. Believe me, I've asked."

I chuckled. "You have?"

She nodded. "Not because I'm into drama or anything but because I'm still trying to figure out what the catch is. You're really amazing and you help anyone that really needs help, myself included. I've met enough humans to know they're not all like you. So it intimidates me a little."

"I really don't want you to be intimidated by me," I said. "I don't think friends should be intimidated by each other."

As soon as I dropped the F-word, I could feel tension in Cassidy's arm. That innocent smile evaporated from her face and she looked like she didn't know what to say.

I knew the reason why, having been on the receiving end of that conversation before I died. And I moved quickly to put her at ease.

"I think everyone starts as friends," I said, grabbing her hand and giving it a little squeeze. "Well, almost everyone. Definitely not Bridgette, but she's an exception to the rule."

That made Cassidy laugh, breaking some of the tension.

"But I see us being more than just friends," I said, testing the waters. "I like you too much. I like who you are. You're different from the other girls in a way that is noticeable to me, and one that I really enjoy. I think you're amazing, Cassidy, and I'd really like to see where this goes."

She finally turned to glance at me, and I could see that her heart was in her eyes. "You mean like romantically, right? Please tell me that's what you mean?"

I didn't answer her with words. Right there, in the middle of the market, I kissed her soundly. My arms wrapped around her body, coming to rest right below her waist, where her skin met her fur.

At that moment, I got exactly what I wanted. I felt Cassidy's eagerness to kiss me combined with her relative experience. Our kisses were short and jerky, but also incredibly genuine. No one would mistake her kisses for Bridgette's, but I was more than happy for it anyway.

Experiencing this side with Cassidy was something that no one else got to experience before. And she was all mine.

When I pulled away, Cassidy's eyes were still closed. Her lips were parted, and I could see traces of our saliva coating them. Her eyes popped open suddenly, revealing a dreamy look that I found mesmerizing.

"Wow," she said. "You kissed me."

"I kissed you."

"Why'd you do that?" she asked, not because she was mad, but more because it seemed she was trying to rationalize what just happened.

I chuckled. “Because I’ve been wanting to do that for some time.”

“I’m so glad you did,” she said. “I’ve been wanting to kiss you too.”

Just like that, I felt like we broke some kind of barrier between us. Even though Cassidy was comfortable with me before, I could tell she was holding back, possibly because she was afraid of being that vulnerable with someone.

After we kissed, it was like getting the chance to see the real Cassidy. And I loved what I saw.

“What do you think about this?” she asked, grabbing a wide-brimmed hat off a display rack run by elderly elf couple. “Do you like it?”

“I love it,” I said. “Why don’t you get it?”

“I think I will,” she said. “For two reasons. The first is that you really like it, and the second is that thanks to you and Paulina, I have spending money.”

She paid for the hat and put it on, which seemed to complete the transformation that I’d just witnessed. From that moment on, there was nothing that Cassidy couldn’t share with me. I found out about why she was still a virgin, which stemmed from her lack of a love life. Her parents had been almost too strict with their daughters, forbidding them from having a social life which resulted in them being too sheltered. Cassidy was still trying hard to deal with the sudden onset of adulthood while still feeling like a kid to her parents.

“It’s just the mixed signals that I can’t stand,” she admitted, after we’d been walking around for forty-five minutes. “They want me to be an adult, but they still end up treating me like I’m a little girl. It’s either one or the other. You can’t have both.”

“Have you tried talking to them about this?” I asked. “They have to know the way they’re making you feel.”

Cassidy nodded reluctantly. “Several times. They just don’t listen. It goes back to the same initial problem. To them, I’m just a kid that doesn’t know any better.”

I squeezed her hand, mostly since we hadn't stopped being affectionate this entire time. "I'm sorry it has to be that way. For the record, I didn't think much of your dad when he answered the door last weekend."

She groaned. "He can be a real jerk at times. It's hard to deal with."

"Well, as long as you know that you never have to cope alone," I said, smiling at her.

"Trust me," she said. "If I have you, I don't feel alone."

Those words spoke volumes about the way that Cassidy felt, and I was proud enough to wear them like a badge of honor. The day couldn't possibly have gotten any better, but soon enough we started to run into the other girls.

The next one we found was Nikki. Judging by the way she was rushing over to us, she spotted us a long time before we spotted her. She was also holding something that I couldn't identify at first. Once she was closer though, I could see exactly what it was.

A box of green candles.

"Kevin, Cassidy, look what I found!" she said, her voice high from her excitement. "Half off the price too! What a steal! Now we'll have enough candles to pray to Malfiore for the next six months!"

The whole Malfiore thing still amused me, but I'd learned to tolerate it just because it meant so much to Nikki. Cassidy's patience with the whole thing went to the next level though.

"That's wonderful, Nikki," she said, completely genuinely. "I'm so glad you found it!"

Nikki beamed with a smile. "He's going to be so pleased with me. I'm such a good servant to him. I'm not going to have any enemies left in the whole city by the time those candles burn out. I'll have to start inventing enemies. Ha! Can you imagine that?"

"Or maybe we don't have to kill anyone in the demon's name?" I suggested. "Especially if they're not hurting us or anything. We could just leave people alone."

I thought my suggestion was perfectly reasonable but Nikki seemed to take it as a joke. She started cracking up and slapping my shoulder.

“See? This is what I like about you. You’re so funny!” said Nikki, putting her candles back in her bag. “I’m going to see if I can find any demonic incense. Want me to purchase some for you if I find a good deal?”

“Sure,” I said. “Knock yourself out.”

She grinned and waved as she walked away.

“I like her a lot but sometimes I think we’re on two completely different wavelengths,” I admitted to Cassidy.

“She’s so sweet,” replied Cassidy. “I mean, as sweet as a demon-worshiping goth can be. Which is surprisingly sweet when you come to think about it.”

We kept moving along, finding other items to buy. Cassidy found a pair of work shoes that she wanted to purchase for doing the maid job, which opened up another avenue of conversation that we hadn’t hit yet.

“So you have a full week of doing the job under your belt now,” I said. “How are things going? I mean how are they *really* going? Don’t sugarcoat anything for me. Is it still mostly okay?”

“I’m getting better, I think,” she replied. “I haven’t broken anything in two days! Can you believe it?”

“Are you doing something different?”

“Just trying to be aware of my big butt,” she said, which caused her tail to swish about. “I think it’s helping. I’m not as nervous either, which means I’m not bouncing around because I’m afraid of doing the wrong thing.”

I smiled. “So you’re going to be with us for the long term, right? Paulina has spoken very highly of you the last few days. I think you’re getting the swing of things.”

“Let’s just say that I’m determined not to be the one that screws things up,” she said, laughing with me. “I’m going to be a great maid, Kevin. Even if that means I have to earn my stripes a little.”

I wrapped my arm around her. “You already are. And I can speak for Paulina in that we’re both so glad to have you. You’re like family to us.”

“Just with the added chance of oral sex?” she asked, giggling in the process.

“Well, yeah, there’s always that.”

Chapter Fifteen

THAT NIGHT, we came home totally wiped out after the hydra race.

There were no video game explosions tonight. No music from the living room or mafia shows on the television. For once the house was completely quiet as the girls passed out one by one from exhaustion.

Some of the new girls even stayed over. Both Bridgette and Nikki fell asleep on the couch like they did the previous night. Cassidy managed to make it home, but I had no doubt that she was probably passed out like the others.

I was surprised that I was still awake by the time it was dark, but the one other person who was still up too was the one that shouldered the burden of the business with me.

Like usual, I found Paulina in her room, clicking away at her computer. She was dressed down, wearing a thin white t-shirt that showed way too much cleavage for wearing in public (but was just perfect for me). Completely the outfit was a really thin pair of booty shorts, making her look absolutely delectable. Her hair was put up in a messy bun, and she was wearing glasses as she worked on the computer.

“I thought everyone fell asleep,” I said, entering her room and making my way over to her office. “What are you still doing up?”

Paulina exhaled loudly. “Well, I was going to go to sleep. And I was laying in bed, but I was thinking about all this stuff that I still wanted to do. And then I just couldn’t sleep. So here I am, plugging away as usual.”

I bent down so I could see her screen, which was on a listing page for available commercial office space in the city. She was about to click on one listing that advertised itself as being great for new and upcoming businesses.

“Looking to get us a new home? Or just a business office?” I asked.

“Just an office. And I’m really only thinking about it for now,” she replied. “The house is getting kind of tight now with all the girls. And I would love a place where we could all meet up beforehand—you know, a place that is

our own where we could exchange notes or talk about clients. We could run our operations from there, and have a place to change or to rendezvous between shifts. Most of the other bigger businesses out there have offices, so why not us?"

"I remember being at the dwarf ladies' office," I said. "Well, I remember their draconian boot camp mostly."

"Yeah, they're an extreme example," replied Paulina. "But it's just an idea that I'm kicking around. Especially with some of these places, the rent is pretty cheap. If we can afford it, then why not?"

"And then we could bring in potential clients to see our offices," I said, speculating a step further. "Or let them see us training new girls. What would be better than a firsthand look into how we do business? It would speak even more volumes than the videos on our website, especially if they could see it up close?"

"I have to admit," said Paulina, grinning at me. "The way your brain works is very sexy to me."

"Right back at you, beautiful," I said, chuckling. "But there's a lot of potential that opens up for us with an office. Not that our duplex isn't a wonderful home, but it's not the best place for us to conduct business. And I think we've grown enough to earn the right to have a proper place to meet."

Paulina leaned into me. "You know, I was thinking I was going to have to sell this to you, not the other way around. I've been thinking about it for the last few days, so I'm already mostly onboard with this. If you are, well, I think it becomes an easy decision."

"Is there any place in particular that you really like?" I asked. "A space that you can see us in?"

I almost knew better than to ask because Paulina immediately clicked on an open link and started showing me pictures.

"How perfect would this one be?" she gushed. "Offices for you and me with great big windows looking out over the city. A great large room that would be amazing for training. It even has a locker room between the

bathrooms for shift changes. The rent isn't bad at all, and it puts us within minutes of all of our clients. It's perfect!"

Once I saw the pictures, I knew it was the one for us. It was bright, clean, and airy, with just enough space for our growing business with some left over for continued growth. The thought of having my own desk there, without having to share Paulina's cramped space in her bedroom, was definitely enticing.

"So what's stopping us?" I asked. "If you're in, then I'm in. Let's go see the place."

She jumped out of the chair as quickly as she could and hugged me. "Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you! This is going to be so amazing, I promise you."

I laughed and hugged her back. "I have no doubt. I can already see our logo on the door as well as us showing new clients our space. We've really come a long way, haven't we?"

"It also opens up another avenue for us," she said, clicking a new tab that wasn't about potential office spaces. "With our own dedicated space, we are also eligible to get rated."

The tab she pulled up was a business rating agency that was based here in the city. Right across the top of the page was an emblem of a golden ribbon that I'd seen before, but I struggled to place it.

"Where have I seen that ribbon before?" I questioned, trying to rack my brain.

Paulina cleared her throat and clicked to another page, bringing up the website of our former dwarf lady foes. "Here. And probably some of the other big companies too."

I snapped my fingers. "Yep, that's where I remember it from. Okay, so fill me in. It's a rating agency from what I can see. And it'll add legitimacy to our business? Bring us more clients?"

"All of the above," she replied. "Basically how it works is if they do an inspection of your business and grant you a stamp of approval, you have the right to call yourself a certified member on their list of approved

businesses. It’s not a requirement to operate by any stretch of the imagination, but there are some places that will only work with approved businesses, and usually they are quite large. Think of it like an entry fee to get into the major leagues, and you won’t be far from the truth.”

“What’s stopped you from getting it in the past?” I asked. “If it’s so good, why don’t we have it already?”

Paulina gave me a shy look. “Two things mostly. Number one, you have to have a dedicated work space to be eligible, hence the natural progression about getting an office.”

“Very natural,” I joked. “And very practical.”

She beamed with a smile. “The second is the cost. It can be a little expensive for small businesses, so that only leaves it to the big companies. But we can meet the costs now and it should only bode well for us.”

“So we get an office, we get our certification, and then we start enjoying the good life?” I asked. “Seems like a pretty simple choice to me.”

“I’ll get us entered then as soon as we have the office space,” she said. “Though I’m wondering if I should still call us Goblin Girl Maid Service?”

Paulina touched on something that I’d already been questioning myself. With the addition of Cassidy and Nikki, we clearly were not just a company of goblin girl maids anymore. Technically, you could say that I fit into that mix as well being human, but I wasn’t the one showing up to work at these penthouses either.

“Are you thinking about a change?” I asked. “Drop the goblin girl part for something more inclusive?”

Paulina shrugged. “Yes and no. I don’t know if it matters to be honest. Goblin Girl Maid Service is all about our roots, and I think it can still stay even if we hire more non-goblin girls. Basically, it becomes not a literal description of us, but a metaphorical description of what you get by hiring us. Does that make sense?”

“Not at all, but keep going,” I joked. I had to dodge an incoming poke from Paulina in the process. “But I get what you’re saying. Besides, what

would we change it to anyway?”

She winced at me. “Monster Girl Maid Service?”

I shrugged. I didn’t love it. And I kinda agreed with Paulina in that there was a certain charm to GGMS. Even if they weren’t all goblin girls, it still spoke to how we started, and I thought that was more important than being completely literal with the name.

“I’m not sold,” I said. “Let’s stay as GGMS. If we keep growing with new girls that aren’t goblins, then maybe we’ll have a case for it. Until then, let’s just stay who we are.”

Paulina seemed satisfied with that. She kissed me sweetly and put in for a meeting with the real estate agency for our downtown space. I thought to leave her to it, but to my surprise she shut down the computer right after that and dragged me over to her bed.

“There’s one more thing you need to do before you go to sleep,” she said, pushing me down on her bed.

“What’s that?”

She grabbed that thin t-shirt and picked it up over her head. “You need to make me pregnant, my hunky boyfriend. I can’t let you go until I know you’ve put your baby in my belly.”

Talk about your greatest come-ons ever. I was quite sleepy and ready for bed until she said that, but in a matter of seconds, I was ready to go. I loved role-playing this with her, and I found the idea as arousing as she did.

When Paulina slipped off those little shorts, I couldn’t help but admire her body. Even though I’d see her naked many times by this point, each time was still just as good as the first time. Of all my girls, there was just something special about Paulina—a connection that we shared that just couldn’t be replicated.

“Can you make me pregnant tonight?” she whispered, reaching into my shorts and fishing out my cock. “Because I need it really bad. Need to be a naughty girl for you.”

My cock was hard enough to cut diamonds, and when she spit in her hand to lube me up, I was ready for action. Paulina wormed her way into bed, slipping under me. She used both hands to pull her legs back, giving me total access to her body. I could see that her pussy already glistened in anticipation of what was about to happen.

I couldn't help myself. I leaned down low and took a nice long lick of her slit, starting right below the opening and finishing at her clit. Paulina shivered under me, squeezing her hips temporarily until parting them once more.

"Don't tease me," she whimpered. "Put it in me. Please? I'll beg if I have to. Don't make me beg. Just give me that big, beautiful cock?"

I grabbed the shaft and placed the tip right at her entrance. "How badly do you want it? Tell me?"

She moaned. "So so *fucking* bad. Uh huh. Need you. Need that cock. Inside me. Mmm, yes. Need you to cum in me. Make me pregnant. Please make me pregnant, baby? Pretty please? Oh fuck—"

Any self-control I had completely crumbled. Before Paulina was finished speaking, I just slid inside, savoring that fiery warmth that always made my toes curl. It was like being inside a furnace. The heat always got to me, and when combined with her utter wetness, I knew I wouldn't last long inside my gorgeous goblin girl.

"I swear you got bigger," moaned Paulina, pushing her hips back at me. She was still holding her legs up, giving me unrestricted access to give her the deepest strokes I could. I took full advantage of that, starting with a rapid pace that saw my balls smacking against her asshole.

"Give it to *me*," whimpered Paulina. "Cum in me, Kevin. Cum in my tight, wet pussy!"

We were moving together now with sheer fury. Our hips smashed together almost angrily at the quick pace that I set, both of us needing each other more than anything else. I placed both hands right against Paulina's tiny waist, holding her in place while I repeatedly drove my cock into her.

"It's so good," she said, practically crying tears of happiness once her orgasm hit. "I can't even get enough! Oh fuck, please give me your cum!"

By the time I was ready to cum, I was a man possessed. I had no other agency inside my body other than that need for release. The house could have been burning down around me, and I still wouldn't have pulled myself away from Paulina's incredible body.

I just needed to give her what she wanted. I needed to fill her, impregnate her.

When it all came rushing out, I buried myself inside the beautiful goblin girl under me. Paulina frantically sought my lips, kissing me endlessly as spurt after spurt of fertile cum deposited into her womb. I even think I blacked out for a moment—the force of my orgasm so strong that it temporarily took over my senses.

When I came to, I was resting half on the bed and half on Paulina. I could feel her fingers massaging the back of my scalp while her other hand scratched at my back. I pulled up to look at her only to see a dreamy smile on her face.

"I think I blacked out for a minute," I said, shaking my head.

Paulina giggled. "Glad I'm not the only one that happens to. Have you not had sex in a few days or something?"

"No, I had sex with Bridgette last night. Why?"

"It just feels like you kept cumming and cumming," she teased.

"Maybe it was the idea of impregnating you?"

Paulina let out a moan of approval. "Then I guess we need to do that more often."

"Sounds great to me."

Chapter Sixteen

With all the new girls fully trained, the next week started off a lot better than the previous one.

I saw them off on Monday morning, and by the middle of the week, there hadn't been a single accident or incident. In fact, they all looked quite happy. Especially Cassidy, who seemed to be hitting her stride. Paulina kept me posted on how she was performing, mostly since they still did the occasional tag-team. And Cassidy was doing great.

"I'm not exactly sure how you teach spatial awareness, but Cassidy has definitely improved in that area," Paulina told me on Thursday night. "She's not backing into anything, or knocking things over with her tail. Total improvement."

"I think a lot of that was just nerves," I said. "She was so nervous that it was creating a problem. She's definitely relaxed a little now, so I think that's why it's melted away."

"Either way, she's been coming along nicely," said Paulina. "I think next week I might start her off on her own. See what she does, you know?"

That made me happy to hear. I knew Cassidy would be overjoyed to hear the news too, and she would probably see it as being accepted into the group. Things were definitely looking up, and that joyous atmosphere continued that evening when Kennedi came rushing home clutching a magazine.

"People are talking about us!" shrieked Kennedi, practically throwing the magazine into our laps. "Turn to page ten. Look at what was written about us!"

"Oh, this magazine," said Paulina. "I was wondering if this was going to show up or whether this reporter was just full of hot air."

"What are you talking about, Paulina?"

"I gave an interview last week to a reporter that had heard about us winning the Beauman contract," she said. "She told me she was going to

try to get it into her magazine, but didn't know how soon that would be. I guess she got it in?"

"She not only got it in, she made that piece her bitch," said Kennedi with a bright grin. "She made us look awesome. Read it!"

It was a full spread on our company, involving a few pictures of Paulina and Cassidy going about their daily cleaning. I looked over Paulina's shoulder and began to read it myself.

"Up and coming maid service company, Goblin Girl Maid Service, is out to clean house with their competition," I read aloud, chuckling at the cliche statement. "The owner of GGMS, Paulina continues to build on the legacy her parents started and now employs five additional maids in addition to herself. After winning the exclusive contract with the Beauman Hotel last month, Paulina hopes to take the maid service market by storm, becoming the company with the best value offering in the city. And with her skills and fresh-faced team, she is poised to become a real player in Dragonmont City."

"A real player?" questioned Paulina. "Hmm, this kinda makes me sound like some kind of shark."

"No, it makes you sound like a total badass!" said Kennedi. "A badass boss babe. Or B-Cubed. That could be your new nickname!"

Paulina laughed. "That's okay, I like my real name anyway."

"Whatever you say, B-Cubed."

"This is some really great press," said Sadie, who had made her way behind us and was now reading too. "I wonder if this will bring in some new bids for us?"

"It certainly seems that way," I said, flipping to the front. "This is a cool magazine. Is it all about service work inside the city?"

Kennedi nodded. "I've had a subscription for some time. You always get relevant news for our business, and they quite frequently talk about other maid companies too. They featured those dwarf bitches a year ago, and that was about the time their business exploded."

“You can gleam a lot from this magazine,” said Paulina, flipping a few pages ahead of where I currently was. “Like for instance, look at this.”

The page she flipped to was more of an announcement reel than anything else. After scanning it quickly, Paulina pointed to a part that showed that yet another goblin girl company had been gobbled up by EHS, the growing home service conglomerate that was becoming increasingly harder to ignore.

“Oh no, not Goblins & Co too!” moaned Kennedi. “I know those girls. They’re good people! They’ve been sold to EHS too?”

“Just finalized this week,” said Paulina.

Bridgette, who was on the other side of the room, now rushed over to us. “Wait, did someone say EHS?”

“You know them?” asked Paulina.

Bridgette nodded. “Remember when I told you I had worked at other maid service companies but nothing that panned out? EHS was one of them. I didn’t even last a week there.”

“How terrible was it?” asked Kennedi. “Were they a bunch of assholes?”

“A bunch of assholes that only cared about making money and paying their employees as little as possible,” confirmed Bridgette. “That’s why I didn’t last. It’s clear they don’t know a single thing about providing decent maid service.”

“Still, it’s not like they’re just going away,” said Paulina. “They’ve bought up another company of very good and experienced girls. Now Goblins & Co are just gone. The market is getting much smaller.”

“Soon there wouldn’t be anyone left but us and them,” I said. “This is a little worrying. How are they able to gobble up all these companies?”

“They must have some serious cash on hand,” said Paulina.

“Yeah that, or blackmail,” said Kennedi as her eyes narrowed. “I bet they have dirt on everyone. Secret cameras all around us that capture our moves and leave us prone to blackmail.”

Paulina giggled and rolled her eyes. “What kind of blackmail would they capture from you, Kennedi?”

“Shh!” said Kennedi, putting her finger to her lips. “They might be listening. But they would definitely know I like to be restrained during sex. And that I have fake boobs.”

“Not like that’s actually a secret,” I said, making Paulina laugh again.

“Either way, we ought to be careful just in case,” said Kennedi. “These EHS assholes seem like they’re out for blood. Let’s not give them any openings.”

For some reason, that gave me an idea. I gave the magazine back to Kennedi as I left the room and went over to Paulina’s office. Paulina followed me, mostly out of curiosity, and stood behind me as I fired up the computer and started searching for EHS.

What I found seemed to confirm my suspicions, but it also raised a bunch of new questions.

“Look at that,” I said, scanning the company’s Stoogle reviews. “Yikes, I’ve never seen so many one stars in my life.”

The entire page was full of one-star reviews. It was like everyone that did business with EHS hated it and wished they could take it back.

“Low morale, bad wages, and they treat you like crap here,” I said, reading a review that was titled, “Just a Number.” In fact, their overall rating was only a 2.6, which was terrible in the grand scheme of things.

“How do people like this stay in business when everyone who works with them has something bad to say about it?” I questioned, scrolling past pages of bad reviews. “It truly boggles my mind.”

“Maybe most of these people didn’t have any other choices,” suggested Paulina. “Or they found out before it was too late, kinda like Bridgette did. Even if they fired EHS and brought in someone else, the damage was already done.”

“Everyone else might be afraid of this EHS, but not me,” I said. “Not when their reviews are total crap. As long as people hate doing business with them, I don’t view them as much of a threat.”

“That’s kinda what scares me though,” she admitted. “Yeah, reviews mean a lot when there’s a lot of different businesses and you can pick and choose the best. But when you’re the only game in the city, reviews won’t mean much.”

Paulina had a point. EHS’ strategy couldn’t have been more apparent at that point. Why worry about service when you could drive all your competitors out of business? It was a classic case of divide and conquer.

But I wasn’t about to let us fall victim to their scheme. No matter what the cost.

The next morning was a big day for us. I’d spent the night in Paulina’s bed again, but as I awoke, I found a fully-dressed Kennedi standing in front of me, wearing her business best.

“Rise and shine, boss,” she said, grinning at me. “Today’s the day we get ourselves an office!”

I rose, in more ways than one. Mostly it was because of seeing Kennedi. She definitely looked like she belonged in the office, and I could tell she spent extra time to make herself look gorgeous. Her hair was pulled back in a loose ponytail, with just a few strands out to frame her face. She was wearing a pair of glasses that made her look very smart, and that I enjoyed very much.

The rest of her was wearing this professional gray blazer that was paired with a gray pencil skirt, showing off Kennedi’s long legs. Her blouse underneath was purple to match her hair, and it was cut low enough that I had a great view of her cleavage.

My mouth fell open as I appraised her, making her grin.

“Cat got your tongue, boss?” she asked, pulling her glasses down low over her nose. “Or do you have something you want to tell me?”

“I’d hire you any day of the week,” I growled. “Fuck, you’re gorgeous.”

Kennedi purred and plopped herself down in my lap, wrapping an arm around my shoulder. “Hey, boss, I think it’s time we talked about all the sexual harassment going on in the office. Do you think you could do more of it? Please? I’ll dress even sluttier if you can make me that promise?”

I answered her by smacking the only part of her ass that was exposed to me, making her shriek with excitement. In the process, we woke up Paulina, who took one look at Kennedi and shook her head.

“I guess I better take some extra time to get ready too,” said Paulina. “I can’t have Kennedi look like a million opals and me looking all shabby by comparison.”

“Well, I wish you luck, Polly,” teased Kennedi. “It’s going to take a lot to look as good as this.”

I never would have taken that bet with Kennedi. By the time we were ready to leave, I didn’t know where to look. Both women were dressed to the nines in their professional business outfits, with Paulina wearing something very similar to Kennedi. The only difference between the two was that Paulina’s blouse was white and her skirt just went a little bit further than Kennedi’s. Still, Paulina’s heels were higher, making her no less sexy.

For myself, I picked a smart collared shirt and some black slacks. I wanted to look the part of a serious business owner, and I think the outfit did the job nicely.

“So we’re just going to see the place and then we can place our bid for it today, right?” asked Kennedi as we walked toward the downtown office.

“Yes,” answered Paulina. “Though I’m sure there will be other bids. How could there not be? The space is literally perfect.”

“We’ll just have to be the best bid out there,” said Kennedi, giving a fist pump. “Beat all the competition, just like we do with the business.”

“I don’t know about that,” I said. “It’s not a great idea to get into a bidding war with anyone. Just don’t get your hearts set on this place in case it falls through. If we don’t get it, we’ll just find something else we’ll love.”

I had a feeling I was mostly speaking for myself. One look at the girls told me they were already both sold on this place, and if we didn't get it, I feared they would be pretty upset.

Hopefully we wouldn't have to fight it out with another company.

The office building was one that was right in the heart of downtown Dragonmont City. It rose over fifty stories—most of which were full of businesses up to the fortieth floor. The last ten floors were a mix of penthouses and maintenance rooms. I asked Paulina if she ever worked in any of the penthouses in this building but she'd never been here.

"You'd be surprised how many fairy penthouses are in the city," she told me as we walked into the lobby. "I don't think I've even seen a quarter of them. There's just that many fairies."

I was about to ask her something else when my breath was taken away by the sight of the lobby.

Talk about a fancy lobby. I knew most buildings in this part of the city tended to overdo it, and this definitely fit the mold. Not many lobbies managed to pull off a three-story waterfall, but this one did in a way that was elegant without making it too much of a distraction. The waterfall fed into a large koi pond that took up much of the rest of the real estate in the lobby.

We actually had to use a bridge to get to the other side of the koi pond, at which case we found a map explaining the floor layout.

"Let's see, the agent told me that the office was on the fifteenth floor," said Paulina, quickly scanning the list. "And it looks like the fifteenth floor is currently vacant, so it checks out. Come on, let's get in the elevators."

"Last one in is a rotten potato!" said Kennedi, racing for the elevator.

Of course she was there first, grinning at both of us when we stepped inside.

"I think you meant rotten egg," I told her. "Not a rotten potato."

Kennedi shrugged. "I like my way better."

I knew better than to argue with that, and instead I just shook my head and laughed as the elevator dinged at each successive floor. Finally, the doors popped open on the fifteenth floor, where we found a small lobby leading to a pair of glass doors.

We also weren't alone. A very old goblin lady was waiting for us. She was mostly hunched over, and her hair was as white as snow, which made me guess her age. She wore these really thick glasses to help her see, but her outfit said anything but grandmother. Most of her hair was held back in a headband that spanned the length of her face. She was wearing a pair of old bell-bottom pants, as well as a fringed dark-green vest.

She didn't look like any elderly woman I'd ever seen. She almost looked like a hippie grandma, which was apparent from the moment she gave her name.

"Hello, hello, you must be my appointment this morning!" she said, with more vigor than I would have given her credit for. "My name is Blossom, and I'm the agent for this listing!"

Yup, definitely a hippie. The name all but confirmed it for me.

"Hello, Blossom," said Paulina, shaking hands. "I'm Paulina, and these two are Kevin and Kennedi. Thank you so much for meeting with us today."

"Blessings and peace be with you," said Blossom, gripping my hand with both of hers while doing the same thing to Kennedi.

"Yeah, and the same shit to you too," said Kennedi, which made me laugh but earned an angry glare from Paulina.

"Erm, sorry, she's very blunt sometimes," said Paulina. "She definitely grows on you though."

"Far out and no worries," replied Blossom. "I was young once too! So what are you looking for this space for? A place to grow your harem, I take it?"

I stuttered, definitely not expecting her to say *that*. Even Paulina seemed a little taken aback.

Blossom noticed our apprehension and jumped in right away. “I’m sorry if that was too presumptuous of me! I just see a few goblin girls and a human man, and of course, I go back to my younger days. I was in a harem once too, and it was such a lovely experience!”

“Really, you were?” asked Kennedi. “How long ago are we talking about? Like a hundred years?”

“Kennedi!” hissed Paulina. “Be nice.”

“Oh, she’s totally fine,” said Blossom with a wave. “Sometimes, it really does feel like it was that long ago. I’m approaching eighty so at least a good sixty years ago. Great memories, I tell you. And it warms my heart to see others do it too.”

“Well, we are in a relationship together,” I said, feeling the need to clarify. “But this is for our business. We just need a space to house our growing business.”

“And what kind of business do you do?” asked Blossom sweetly.

“It’s maid service,” said Paulina. “Goblin Girl Maid Service to be exact.

“That’s totally radical!” said Blossom. “I’m just glad to hear that you’re not working for the man! I’m not a big fan of big corporations at all.”

“Really?” replied Kennedi with a straight face. “I never would have guessed that.”

Her sarcasm went right over Blossom’s head, which I think was a good thing. We had to deal with a five-minute talk about corporate greed before I was able to reel us back over to the reason for being there.

“Can you show us around the space?” I asked. “We’ve seen all the pictures online, and I’d love to see it more in person.”

“Totally, come follow me, child,” replied Blossom, taking the keys and unlocking the double glass doors.

As weird as our interaction with Blossom had been, I could tell it really was the place for us from the moment we walked inside. Clean, hardwood floors and light, airy walls made it feel incredibly welcoming, almost as if it already had a soul of its own. There were plenty of windows to provide

natural light, and I could see many views of nearby buildings out of all of them.

I could even see the Beauman just a short distance away. Having an office so close to our existing work would be amazing.

“How big did you say your company was again?” asked Blossom as she showed us around. “Headcount I mean?”

“Seven for now,” replied Paulina. “But definitely could grow.”

“This space was meant for fourteen to eighteen comfortably, but any larger than that and you might want something bigger,” said Blossom. “For your current size, it would be perfect as you go through steady expansion.”

“What about on-site facilities?” asked Paulina, keeping up with Blossom while Kennedi and I hung back. “How easy is it to contact maintenance?”

They left for another room, leaving Kennedi and I alone. We both approached one of the main windows and looked out, taking on the sight of the entire city.

“You know what we should do?” said Kennedi, who wormed her way into my arms.

“What’s that?”

“Christen it!” she said, grinning at me. “We need to make this office feel like home! Let’s fuck in it, okay?”

“Right now?” I whispered.

Kennedi started to giggle. “I was referring to after we bought it, but if you’re ready to go right now, I’m game. I don’t think we’d put out the old lady either. She seems really in-tune with the whole harem thing. She might even want to jump in.”

“I’m going to pass on that one,” I said. “She seems a little kooky.”

“So am I, but you still love me, right?” she asked, giving me a vulnerable look while sticking out her bottom lip.

“True, but you’re also not eighty years old.”

“She says she’s *almost* eighty, so that has to count for something, right?”

I shook my head. “Yeah, not really!”

Kennedi just giggled at my side. “I can see it already. You can have your office in here. You’ll need a desk for sure. Like one of those L-shaped desks. You know the executive kind? Those are total panty-droppers. And when I get back from my shift, I can just slide under your desk and take care of you. Wow, I’m loving this idea already!”

“You’re not the only one,” I muttered. The idea of pounding away at the keyboard while Kennedi blew me under the desk was definitely an inviting one. Or even having her sit on the edge of the desk while I pounded her. Or bending her over it.

Really, any idea with Kennedi naked and also involving a desk would be arousing.

All sex aside, I could definitely see it. I could see the girls getting ready to go out each morning. I could see myself working at a desk in here. I could see Paulina and I doing interviews in the room next door, especially if we put a couple comfortable couches in there.

Mostly, I could see this as a place where not only our company, but our family could grow. And that to me was more than worth the price.

“Are you sold on this place?” I asked Kennedi. “I think your opinion holds a lot of weight so I want to make sure you’re onboard with this. Would you be happy here?”

Kennedi nodded eagerly. “It wouldn’t take much to make me happy. I think this space would be a great fit for all of us. I can really see it here, Kevin.”

“I think so too. Come on, let’s see what Paulina thinks.”

Kennedi giggled. “We may need to rescue her from that lady. And we should definitely keep Blossom away from Nikki. I bet she knows a way to get her hands on some really potent pink mushrooms.”

By the time we found Paulina, I could tell what she was thinking. Just one look at that broad smile told me everything I needed to know.

She was totally in.

“We want this space!” said Paulina once the tour was over. “This should be the new home of Goblin Girl Maid Service.”

“That is so totally radical that I can’t even handle it,” gushed Blossom. “Let’s get you started on the paperwork.”

Chapter Seventeen

An hour later, we walked out of the Blossom's mental office in a daze. Some of that was because I swear I got drafts of some kind of mushroom just sitting near her, and I thought it was clouding my brain.

The other part of the daze was finding out just how big of a deposit we would be required to put down, in addition to the monthly rent.

It was safe to say that most of the reserves we'd built up from the Beauman contract had been wiped out in one swoop of a pen. And I could tell it was definitely weighing heavily on Paulina's mind as we made that mostly silent walk back to the duplex.

"Well, let's just look on the bright side," I said, trying to put some cheer back into her. "We'll earn the money back quickly, especially now that we have three new maids to help with all the new jobs."

"That might be the case, but it's going to leave us pretty low on money for the foreseeable future," said Paulina. "At least until we land something big again. Do you think we made the right choice with this? You don't think the deposit was too big, do you?"

It wasn't that much higher than I thought it would be, so I shook my head. "No, it's pretty much in the range of what I thought it would be. But it's going to be just fine. We'll have more than enough money flowing in to handle the cost. Don't worry about it."

"I'd feel better if we could move in right away," said Paulina. "But with it still needing some final renovations, we can't move in for another week."

"The week will go by quicker than you expect," I said. "In no time at all, we'll be in our new offices and ready to start the next chapter of Goblin Girl Maid Service."

Paulina tried to put on a brave face for my sake but I could tell it was still bothering her. Dinner was a mostly quiet affair that night, and it didn't surprise me when she went to bed early. I went to sleep later that night hoping things would turn around tomorrow.

As fate would have it, our luck definitely changed when the sun rose again over Dragonmont City.

The morning started like any other. We staggered into the kitchen one at a time to eat breakfast together. Nikki and Bridgette had both stayed over the night before, which was quickly becoming the norm around the house. Not that I minded in the slightest, but our need for a new, separated workspace was becoming more necessary by the day.

Even still, this was one of my favorite times of the day. Breakfast was my favorite meal, and eating with the girls definitely had its perks. Mostly, I just enjoyed the natural banter that happened between them, adding my own thoughts whenever necessary.

“You ever wonder who actually came up with the idea of a pancake?” asked Kennedi, right before shoveling a big bite into her mouth. “I mean, it’s not a natural food. Who actually thought of it?”

“Oh, here we go,” said Sadie, laughing to herself as she covered her face with her hands. “Kennedi, you’ve said some weird things in the past, but this one takes the cake.”

“Or takes the pancake,” added Bridgette.

“I might take a few more pancakes,” said Kennedi. “But seriously, who was the genius that decided that these little cakes of flour would be so delicious? Did someone just accidentally spill some batter and an egg on a hot pan one day? Say this shit looks tasty, let’s eat!”

“The bigger mystery is when did they decide that putting maple syrup on it makes them taste delicious?” asked Bridgette, giving me a humorous wink as she played along with Kennedi. “Like did they try ketchup first? Or maybe mayo?”

Kennedi thought about it for a second while she stared at her pancakes. “I would try a mustard-covered pancake. I bet you that would be just as good.”

You’d think she just cursed out everyone’s mother. At once, everyone started to protest that mustard would definitely not be an acceptable condiment, mostly while Kennedi remained undeterred. It even progressed to the point that she rushed to the fridge to try it herself.

“Oh god, I can’t watch,” said Sadie. “Mustard on pancakes? Blah!”

We were all still reeling when the phone rang. Paulina took the opportunity to excuse herself from the impending fiasco to answer, only returning after a few minutes with a wildly curious expression on her face.

“Everything alright?” I asked her.

“You’ll never guess who was just on the phone,” she said, setting it on the counter.

“Who?”

“The mayor’s office,” she answered. “They want a meeting with Goblin Girl Maid Service.”

We all fell silent for a moment as the weight of her words hit us. Finally, it was Kennedi that spoke up.

“I hoped he would call to apologize to me personally about the Gobboflix thing,” she said while shuffling a mustard-covered pancake into her mouth. Instantly, her eyes went narrow like she just ate something sour. “Okay, that has a little kick to it.”

“You think?” shouted Sadie, while the rest of us laughed.

“So what does the mayor’s office want?” I asked Paulina right after breakfast.

“It was his assistant that called, and she didn’t really say,” she answered. “The only thing they would tell me on the phone was that they wanted to see if we were interested in some work. Of course, I said yes, and so they asked me to come in today. It’s weird though. A call directly from the mayor. How does that just happen?”

“More referrals?” I asked. “I wonder if Mrs. Pennington has been spreading our name again?”

“Yeah, maybe,” said Paulina. “I just wish I knew what we were walking into. Like would this be a cleaning just for the mayor himself or one of his properties? Maybe one of his businesses? I’d love to get more details.”

“I guess we’ll find out later today,” I said. “Want me to go with you?”

“Oh, absolutely,” she said, grabbing my arm. “You’re my sounding board for everything.”

“Well, it’s not like you can take Kennedi, not with her vendetta against the mayor,” I joked.

“The thought had crossed my mind,” said Paulina, giggling.

“I think this is going to be a great thing for us,” I said. “If the mayor of the whole city is aware of our business, this could go a long way for us. It could open up a lot of doors.”

Paulina didn’t look as sure, but I suspected it was mostly just the nerves. “I really hope so too.”

We had to juggle the schedule around a little bit to free Paulina and me up to make the meeting with the mayor. We left the house shortly after ten and approached the mayor’s downtown office, which was only a couple blocks away from our new property. Like the rest of the downtown office buildings, the lobby in the mayor’s building was no less spectacular, featuring gilded tapestries that depicted the various races of creatures that lived inside the city.

From the lobby, we rode the elevator all the way to the top of the building, which happened to be the seventieth floor, emerging into another lobby area that was no less grand than the one downstairs. It was just as crowded up here too, mostly because there were various city officials going about their day on this floor too.

“I think the entire city government spans the upper half of this building,” explained Paulina. “That’s probably why there are so many people.”

I didn’t think much of it, though I did expect to see more fairies up here than I actually did. The lack of fairies made me say something to Paulina eventually.

“Yeah, I’ve noticed it too,” she said. “It must be because the mayor is an orc. Orcs and fairies aren’t natural friends.”

“In a city ruled by fairies, how did an orc manage to get elected mayor?”

Paulina shrugged. “Maybe the city needed a change?”

I wasn’t so sure either, but I was still questioning it when we checked in at the front desk. We were taken through a set of double doors to an area near the back of the building, where I saw a sign that said, “Office of the Mayor, Gary Brooks.”

“He’s ready to see you now,” said our host, a short orc girl with very pointed ears and teeth. “Please go in.”

I found myself holding my breath as we crossed the threshold together, entering the mayor’s office. It was a spacious office, and it definitely had a commanding view of the entire city. Looking below, I could see just about every building downtown, as well as a good portion of the residential neighborhoods (including our own).

What was most impressive was the balcony. A single set of double doors opened up to a balcony that was huge even by office standards. I could see several chairs and tables positioned out there—the perfect place to work on a lovely summer day. There were a pair of dragons flying just opposite the balcony, making for an entertaining view while you worked.

As we approached the desk, I was able to look at the mayor for the first time. In any other scenario, it almost would have been funny. Here I was looking at a clear orc, with grayish skin, a large, crooked nose, and pointy ears sitting behind a desk. I almost expected him to be in some kind of chain mail, or to tell me that the age of men was over, but he was wearing a three-piece business suit with a bright blue tie.

It was hard to tell the age of orcs because they didn’t show wrinkles, but I guessed he was somewhere between forty and fifty. And he was definitely expecting us as he leaned back in his chair and touched his hands together.

“You must be Paulina of Goblin Girl Maid Service?” he asked, standing up to shake hands.

“Yes, it’s nice to meet you, Mr. Mayor,” said Paulina, shaking hands before turning to introduce me. “This is Kevin, and we’re the owners.”

“Ah, wonderful, well thank you both for coming on short notice,” he said, gesturing for us to sit. “And please, call me Gary. You’re probably wondering why you’re here?”

“We didn’t get that many details when your assistant called us earlier,” I said. “But we’re assuming this is about some work?”

“Yes, of course,” he said, reaching across his desk and finding a magazine. He passed it over to us, and I could see that it was the same one that had the article about us this week.

“I’m in a tough bind. I need to hire maid service, and my wife read an article about your company this week, so she suggested you. Frankly, that was half the battle, because she’s notoriously picky. I might be getting ahead of myself though.”

“You need maid service for your house?” I asked, trying to connect the dots.

“For three properties actually,” he said. “You see, I’ve used the same maid service for years. Goblins & Co? You’re familiar with them, I presume?”

“Oh yes!” said Paulina. “I’ve known them for a long time. But I believe they were just bought up by someone else?”

“Yes, and they informed me that their contracts were no longer valid,” said Gary, shaking his head. “It leaves me in a tough spot because I need regular maid service at three different properties. Not just my house, but the house of my son and his wife and children, and lastly, the house for my mother. All three houses were being taken care of by Goblins & Co, and now suddenly they’re not. So I needed to make arrangements very quickly.”

“We’d love to help you out,” said Paulina. “Our company has recently expanded so we have more than enough maid-power to service three properties. How many times a week would you need us?”

“Two would be plenty,” he said. “Though we can be a handful. Especially my wife. She’s very particular with how the house is laid out. You can say she’s the kind that likes things the way they are, if you know what I mean?”

“So nothing out of place when she gets home,” said Paulina. “No worries, we can handle that. I have a few clients that are like that already.”

“I’m relieved to hear that,” said Gary. “My wife had to go through several companies until she found Goblins & Co, whom she finally liked. One company even stole from us, so you can imagine the time we had to spend to find the right one. I’d hate to have to do that again just to make her happy. Honestly, she should be the one taking care of this, but she’s bedridden after surgery right now, so it falls into my hands.”

“Rest assured that she won’t see anything out of place,” promised Paulina. “Our girls are well-trained. They’re some of the best in the city.”

“I have to tell you though that my son and his wife are usually pretty messy people,” said Gary. “They have lots of pets. Bunnies actually. They roam the entire house, shitting everywhere they go. It’s a tough job that only the most capable of maids can handle.”

“Pets are our specialty too,” I said. “We can handle anything you throw at us.”

Gary let out a sigh of relief. “I’m glad to hear that. You have no idea how much I’ve been stressing over this. When my wife’s unhappy, it’s one thing, but when it’s my whole family going without maid service, I hear it constantly. How soon could you start?”

“As soon as tomorrow?” said Paulina. “I’d have to meet with my team to set the schedule, but we can work on short notice. I’d just need the addresses of everyone involved and we’ll make it happen.”

“That would be amazing,” he said, putting his finger in the air. “But I have to warn you. We need your A-game. If something goes wrong, my wife won’t hesitate to get a quote from someone else. This whole thing makes me nervous, because it’s just something she usually handles. I don’t want to upset her.”

“I can assure you that we’ll be all you need,” I said, trying to stay firm but friendly. “You won’t even notice a difference between us and your former maid service. It’s going to be a seamless transition.”

I could see the tension come out of his shoulders as he sat back in his chair. “I can’t tell you how grateful I would be for that. I know I’m asking for a lot, but I firmly believe in compensating for a job well done. If this

works out, I have lots of friends who could use maid service. I think it would be an ideal scenario for a growing company."

Paulina smiled and stood up to shake his hand. "Then we look forward to earning your business, Gary. Thank you for the opportunity."

"And thank you both for coming," he said, shaking our hands. "I meant what I said. Do a great job and there will be much more work for you."

Chapter Eighteen

"I HOPE you told him to go pound sand. That big jerk!"

Later on that evening, Paulina and I updated all the girls about our meeting with the mayor after the shifts were done for the day. That involved bringing everyone back to the house, where we had a few pizzas delivered to us thanks to Nikki's help. We sat around the table updating them on what was said, and it was only natural that Kennedi was the first one to respond.

"Seriously, he thinks we're just going to help him after he makes stupid laws?" Kennedi continued Kennedi, blowing a raspberry. "Get real! We're not taking this job, are we?"

"Uh, yeah, we are, Ken," replied Paulina. "This would be great for us. It's only two days a week for three houses, and the pay is great. Plus there's the option for referrals. We spent a lot of money on our deposit for our office, so this money is really needed for us to build our reserves back up."

Kennedi crossed her arms in front of her chest. "Hmph! Well, did you at least ask him about repealing that stupid Gobboflix law?'

"Maybe some other time," I said, rubbing Kennedi's shoulder. "Let's do a good job first and then we can talk to him about it."

I could tell she wasn't pleased with the answer, but that was okay. Paulina and I already discussed the likely schedule, and knowing Kennedi's feelings about the mayor, we left her off it.

"So here's what I'm thinking," announced Paulina. "Cassidy and I are going to take the mayor's actual house. His wife is very particular with how things are, so I think it's important that I'm there to make sure everything is done right."

The only one that seemed to have a problem with this was Cassidy, who turned as white as a ghost once she heard it.

"Me?" she questioned, pointing at her own chest. "You want me at the most important house?"

Paulina nodded. “Of course! You’ve been doing a fantastic job recently, and we believe in you. I think you’d be great to work alongside me there.”

Cassidy looked shocked, rendering her speechless. I had to put my arm around her waist just to help her settle.

“You’ll be just fine,” I whispered to her. “Believe in yourself. You’ve got this.”

That seemed to help, but only a little. Cassidy took a deep breath and nodded, but I could tell she wasn’t sure about this. At least she would have Paulina to help her.

“The mayor said that his son’s house is always messy because of pets, so I’m going to put Bridgette on that one.”

“No problem, I can handle a few bunnies,” said Bridgette, giving me a confident smile.

“Perfect,” replied Paulina. “We have a few other obligations tomorrow, so I’m going to put Sadie and Kennedi on our existing work and Nikki on the mayor’s mother’s house. It should be pretty low maintenance anyway. I figure after Nikki is done, she can join the other girls in pounding out the rest of the houses.”

“I’ll make that old lady’s house sparkle,” promised Nikki, before giving me a curious look. “I’ll do a great job for you, I promise!”

That definitely raised a question for me, mostly since I’d been noticing that Nikki had been acting funny around me ever since the Festival. She didn’t say why, but it was almost like she was acting like a lovesick puppy around me. I would catch her watching me from a distance only for her to look away awkwardly when I finally noticed her.

Even when she said grace to Malfiore, I could tell she was watching me for most of it.

I thought that could go one of two ways. Either she was preparing to sacrifice me to Malfiore, or she had a crush on me. I definitely hoped it was the latter, but I wondered what was going to come out of all this extra attention.

“Okay, that’s all of it then,” said Paulina. “If we’re all set, we’ll get this kicked off tomorrow! I can’t wait to see what this does for the business!”

I was looking forward to it too. If we could count the mayor and his family amongst our clients, it would really boost our prestige inside the city. And that would definitely set us apart from this EHS company that was buying up everyone else.

Everything was definitely looking up.

After dinner, we bid goodbye to the girls, namely Cassidy and Bridgette. Nikki was staying over again, but that was hardly anything new. Part of me expected that she was going to ditch her struggling lease to come live with us, not that it would have bothered me. She was a good roommate for the most part.

I almost didn’t know what to do with all the free time I had, but I did sit down right Sadie and Kennedi to watch them play more *Hearts of Iron 4*.

At least Kennedi seemed to be getting better at the game.

“Hey! You can’t naval invade me while I’m fighting the Italians,” shrieked Sadie with her adorable southern accent. “What gives you the right?”

“Because I’m trying to cap your ass,” replied Kennedi with an evil grin. “Shouldn’t have left your ports undefended!”

“Oh, you’re so going to pay for this! Mark my words!”

As a new battle developed between them, I heard the doorbell ring. It was definitely later in the evening, so we weren’t expecting anyone. I figured maybe it was just some neighborhood kids playing a prank, but when I opened my door to see a teary-eyed centaur, my heart practically broke.

“Hey,” said Cassidy, who’d clearly been crying for a while. “Is it okay if I come in?”

“Cassidy! Of course,” I said, beckoning her inside. “What’s wrong? Did something happen? Are you okay?”

“I didn’t know where to go,” she said, stepping into the house. “Normally, I’d go to see my sister, but she just moved in with her boyfriend, and it didn’t feel right to intrude on them.”

I brought her into the living room and offered her a tissue, which she accepted gratefully. I hated to see her this way, with her eyes red and puffy and her glasses all steamed up because of it.

“What happened, Cassidy?” I asked, once she had a moment to get it all out. “Did someone hurt you? Say something to you?”

“The same thing that usually happens, I guess,” she said. “I was mostly fine when I left here after dinner. Mostly, I think. I was a little scared about cleaning the mayor’s house tomorrow, even with Paulina. You can say my nerves were getting the best of me. My hands were shaking on the walk home, and once I got inside my house, my parents noticed something was up. So I told them about the job.”

I winced. “And I take it they weren’t excited for you?”

Cassidy shook her head, making her brown hair dance on her shoulders. “Not really. They thought I was being ridiculous by being so worried about it. They even told me that I needed to grow up and stop acting like such a little girl all the time. I don’t think there’s anything wrong with being nervous. It’s a big job after all.”

I started to rub her back. “It’s perfectly reasonable to be nervous about something like that. It’s a brand new job with the freaking mayor of all people. Hell, I’m even nervous and I’m not the one doing the work tomorrow.”

“I’m just not like them,” said Cassidy, still shaking her head. “They’re not afraid of anything. Never scared, never anxious. I never get any sympathy from them on anything, and I suspect it’s because they don’t know how I feel. I’m just an anxious person though, Kevin. Why do I deserve to be mocked and ridiculed just because I’m different from them?”

I felt like we were finally seeing the heart of the problem. Cassidy was so different from her parents that they didn’t know how to handle her. And when they tried, it just came out entirely different from what she really needed to hear.

She needed someone that could sympathize with her situation, and she was never going to get that from them.

At that moment, I understood why her sister was her biggest support system. Until now, it was only her sister who could understand what Cassidy was feeling and help her through her anxiety.

“Don’t worry about them at all,” I told her, forcing her to look at me. “They may not understand you, but I do. I get nervous too, Cassidy. All the time, about stupid things mostly. That’s just part of life. It doesn’t make you any less of a person because you’re anxious.”

“Tell them that,” she muttered. “I’ve been trying to get them to understand that for years.”

“Well, that’s their problem, not yours,” I said, crossing my arms. “If they don’t understand it, then fuck ‘em. I understand it. I see you, and I think you’re amazing.”

That got a smile out of her. “You’re the only other person besides my sister that tells me that.”

“It sounds like it’s only your sister and me that really know you,” I countered.

Cassidy let out a weak laugh. “You’re a really great person, Kevin. I’m so grateful to know you. You have no idea.”

She hugged me suddenly, squeezing me with all the strength in her arms. I squeezed her back just as tightly, just because I wanted her to feel accepted here. Cassidy didn’t need to be someone that she wasn’t.

The way she was already was good enough for me. And good enough for GGMS.

Cassidy wiped away her tears as the hug slackened but she didn’t let go just yet. Instead, she stared into my eyes for several seconds before she reached up on her front feet and kissed me.

I was enamored by that kiss. So much so that I didn’t want it to end. Her lips were just the right amount of soft and wetness to really get me pushing for more. When our tongues met, I could feel her entire body shudder.

“Thank you for being you,” she said, once we parted.

“If that’s the way you thank me, then I’ll keep it up.”

Cassidy giggled. “I think you have yourself a deal, mister.”

She poked me in the chest playfully and then wiped away the last of her tears.

“I hate to even ask you this, but I have to,” she said, looking around. “And feel free to say no if you want to but . . .”

“Yes, you can stay here,” I said, guessing where she was going with this.

I watched as the tension melted off her shoulders. “Really?”

“Of course,” I said. “You’re the only one of the new girls that hasn’t practically moved in anyway. But we have an empty house tonight, so you’re more than welcome to it. I think you really just need some time to process everything on your own, right?”

“I don’t want to go home tonight,” she said. “I need a break from my parents.”

“Something that everyone has said at least once in their lives,” I joked.

Cassidy hugged me again, and then we went about trying to get her a place to sleep. She was tougher in that I couldn’t just put her on the couch like the other girls, but when Cassidy laid down on the floor in one of the spare bedrooms, she claimed to have all she needed.

“Are you sure about this?” I asked, seeing her on the floor sideways with several pillows propped up under her upper body.

“Oh, definitely,” she said. “Don’t worry about me. I’m used to making do with sleeping in weird ways. Beds were never made for centaurs so we’re used to modifications. Do you have a blanket I could use though?”

It took me a minute to find a spare blanket, but once I gave it to her, she looked to be on her way to being happier again.

“Thank you again,” she said. “For everything. For being so understanding. For being so cool.”

“Don’t mention it,” I said, hugging her. “Just want you to be alright.”

She craned her head to look at me again. Her face turned a heavy shade of red. “Um, do you think I could have another kiss again?”

I was only too happy to give her another smooch. We stood there for several moments just kissing each other, exploring the other person and having a great time doing it despite the fact that it didn't lead to a rapid discharge of our clothing.

Not that I didn't want to, but I knew that I couldn't be that fast with Cassidy. She would need a little slowness before we were anywhere near that stage, and I was determined to go at her pace.

"Wow," she muttered, smiling at me with all traces of her tears gone. "Kissing you is a lot better than the first time I kissed someone."

"I'm going to take that as a compliment," I teased.

"Oh, it definitely is," she said, giving me a coy look that was more at home on Bridgette's face. "I should probably get some sleep. It's been a draining day."

"Just let me know if you need anything. Seriously, Cass, anything you need, okay?"

She nodded and waved goodbye just as I shut the door.

I felt lighter for some reason. It felt great to help someone who truly needed it, especially when they were someone like Cassidy. I also couldn't deny that those kisses didn't have an effect on me. I wanted to do that and so much more with her, but just the simple fact that we were heading in that direction was enough to put a big smile on my face as I made my way back to bed.

Even as my head hit the pillow, I should've known my solitude wasn't going to last for long. It never did in this house. It wasn't long until I was asleep, but there was an odd tugging in the middle of the night that seemed to catch my attention.

Something, or someone, was messing with my arms. By the time my senses were awake, I could feel my hands had been pulled upward on either side, leaving me spread out.

My feet were in the same position, pulled apart so that I had a limb near each bedpost. The freaky thing was that when I tried to move either my

arms or legs, I was stuck. Something was keeping me tied down, which I soon figured out was ropes attached around my wrists and ankles.

Panic set in at that moment. Were we being robbed? Was I about to get a very unpleasant surprise? My eyes popped open as I was ready to do whatever it took to get out of this bed when I saw a very familiar face working on the floor just next to my bed.

It was Nikki.

The silver-haired dark elf looked like she was in the middle of a seance. Small, green candles littered the floor around my bed, giving my room this otherworldly glow. At some point, Nikki had stretched out a pentagram on the floor using chalk, with one of the points facing my direction.

As weird as this was, it was what Nikki was wearing that really caught my attention. It was a very thin nightgown, so thin that it was practically see-through. Every time she stood up to light another candle, I could see her nipples just under the thin material.

I was confused . . . and a little scared. I had a good idea what was happening, and the last thing I wanted was to become a sacrifice to Malfiore.

I had to say something. But what?

“Uh, Nikki?” I asked, trying to get her attention. “What the fuck is going on?”

In true Nikki fashion, she just put her finger to her lips and then lit another candle. She didn’t attempt to answer my question, or say anything at all.

The initial panic that I felt got a little worse.

“Listen, Nikki, I love Malfiore just as much as you do,” I said, losing some of my cool. “But the last thing I want is to be sacrificed to him. Besides, I’m pretty sure you need a virgin to do what you’re about to do. Especially if you want it to work.”

Once the words were out, I realized I might have just thrown Cassidy under the bus, but Nikki only smiled at me. She set down the last candle, hitting every intersection of lines in her pentagram. Now that it was

finished, she crossed her way over to the bed, lifting on leg until she was able to settle directly on top of me.

Now that I had a closer look, her erect nipples were practically in my face.

“Nikki? Seriously, what are you doing?” I asked, adjusting to the weight of her on top of me. “How about we just forget about this and—”

I didn’t get a chance to finish the sentence because Nikki kissed me at that moment. It was a kiss that had a startling amount of passion considering the circumstances. Within seconds, Nikki slipped her tongue into my mouth, frantically searching for mine as our lips moved together.

It was the total opposite of Cassidy’s kisses from earlier. Nikki’s lips moved like we might die that night and never get another chance.

Which, as far as I was concerned, was still a definite possibility considering what I’d witnessed so far.

When the kiss finally broke, Nikki giggled and sat upright. She grabbed the hem of her nightgown and ripped it over her head in one smooth motion.

She wasn’t wearing anything else underneath.

I gawked as my eyes settled on Nikki’s small but tight, toned body. Though I’d seen her mostly topless in the hot tub, none of it did her full body justice. Nikki had a very small frame, being one of the shorter girls, even when compared to the goblins. Her shoulders were narrow, and her hips didn’t stick out very far, but even with her small stature, she was stacked with everything that could turn a man on.

Her boobs were proportional to her body, being small but extremely perky, capped with tiny nipples that seemed happy to be free. Her stomach wasn’t as defined as Bridgette’s, but it was still tight before it dropped down even lower, where I could see a patch of silver pubic hair that was just like the hair on the top of her hair.

It made for such an interesting contrast to see the silver on a background of grayish black. I was enamored with the sight of her, but from this angle, I couldn’t see the region between her legs.

Though I suspected that I wouldn’t have to wait very long.

Nikki leaned forward, not stopping until her breasts were pushed against my chest. It was at that point that I also realized I was naked (how did that happen?). I could feel her nipples trying to burrow a hole against my skin.

“Gracious Malfiore has finally answered my prayers,” she said, leaning down to lick at my lips as if she were a cat. “I finally got you alone, in your own bed, where I could perform the ritual.”

“What kind of ritual are we talking about?” I asked nervously. “Because I’d really like it if everything on my body could stay intact, Nikki. I don’t want to be a sacrifice.”

She giggled at me like it was the most adorable thing she could have heard. She touched my nose with her little finger.

“Silly man,” she said. “This isn’t a sacrifice to Malfiore. This is two of his most devoted disciples, sealing their love with a pact of sweat, love, and utter bodily satisfaction.”

Okay, my eyebrow went up on that one. “Bodily satisfaction?”

Nikki moaned, and then I could feel her grind her hips against me. “Oh, yes. You’ve been on my mind for a while now. Ever since I found out that you recognized Malfiore’s greatness, just like I do, you’ve invaded my mind and stayed there. At first, I doubted whether you had the potential to get there, but you’ve shown me that you’re just as devoted as I am to our demon lord.”

I didn’t know what to say, so I just said the first thing that came to mind.

“Uh yeah, totally. I sure do love serving Malfiore. He’s . . . fucking awesome.”

It sounded lame to my ears, but to Nikki it was like I just professed my undying love for her.

“And now, we will seal our devotion with an act of debauchery,” she said, lifting her hips above me. I could see Nikki reach down, and then I felt her hands wrap around my cock. Despite the situation, I was as hard as I could possibly be. Most of that was due to having Nikki’s stunning body rubbing against mine.

“Any chance you can loosen the ropes?” I asked, ratting my hands. “If it’s debauchery you’re looking for, I can do it better with my hands free.”

Nikki grinned at me and shook her head. “It’s not Malfiore’s way. One of us has to be tied down. Don’t worry, you can tie me up tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow? We’re going to do this same thing tomorrow—oh, fuck.”

My eyes rolled to the back of my head as Nikki suddenly sank down on my cock. At that point in my life, I knew what a pleasure it was to slide into goblin pussy, but this was my first time with a dark elf.

And it was exquisite. Nikki’s pussy was quite possibly the wettest I’d ever been in. From the moment of insertion, I could feel beads of her juices sliding all the way down my shaft and then my balls.

“Fuck, Nikki, that feels so good,” I said, just enjoying that wet, warm feeling around my shaft.

She grinned wickedly at me as she leaned forward, placing another kiss on my lips.

“And now we are united for all time,” she said. “Two of Malfiore’s indisputable disciples. One with the demon lord himself.”

Truthfully, I didn’t give a fuck about all of that. All I cared about right now was enjoying what I could of Nikki’s incredible body. Even though I couldn’t do much in my position, it certainly didn’t feel that way. When Nikki began to move her hips back and forth, grinding on me, it was enough to make my balls feel tight already.

But that was nothing compared to the feeling of when she started to work her hips, bouncing up and down on my cock with rapidly-building speed.

“I’ve been dreaming of this,” cooed Nikki, reaching down to caress my face as her ass moved at breakneck speed. “Dreamed of the night we could make this happen. Getting to you was the hard part, but I know why. All the other girls need you too. But I need you now. One small taste isn’t enough to last my entire life, Kevin. I’m going to need you regularly now too.”

“I’m always here for you,” I said, biting my lip as her pussy squeezed my cock. “Whatever you need, I’m yours.”

She threw her head back and really started twerking that ass on me. Her movements were so fast that I thought there was a decent chance of her breaking the sound barrier. How any woman could ride as well as she did was beyond my comprehension, but after a certain while, I just ceased caring.

I wanted to cum. And I wanted to cum *hard*.

Nikki didn't seem to have any problems in that department. Her orgasms came rapid-fire, quick but intense little hiccups that only slowed her down for a second before she resumed full speed. It was impossible to count all of them, mostly because it seemed like they happened every few seconds.

"So, so, *so* good!" she moaned after her last one. "Oh yes. Here's another. Uh huh. It's coming. Sweet Malfiore, it's coming. There—ugh! There it goes. Another! Oh yes!"

Even just listening to the gorgeous dark elf cum was getting to me. I wasn't far behind her. I could feel my body responding to her every thrust, making us a well-timed symphony of movements. But now it was time for the big crescendo. I could feel it moving through my balls and up my shaft. I slammed up into her as far as I could go right as the moment arrived.

The moment that Nikki felt the first spurt of cum hit the back of her pussy, her face turned positively joyous. It was a dreamy expression that I was very familiar with from the other girls in the house, and seeing it on her face helped to ride me through the rest of my orgasm.

I was still spewing cum when Nikki suddenly leaned down, kissing all over my face while I felt her body milk me of any remaining cum. At one point, I definitely overflowed her pussy, because I could feel it leaking back out of her and sliding down on me. I would definitely need new sheets tonight.

Once my orgasm was over, I found myself looking into Nikki's reddish eyes. She kissed me sweetly on the lips before standing up, lifting her legs over mine until she was standing. At that point, she grabbed her spell book off my desk and started to read an incantation in some language I didn't even know existed.

There were a few sounds I was able to make out. Of course, Malfiore's name was mentioned a few times. Alongside something that sounded like death, but then again I couldn't be too sure until she finished and shut the book.

"So, are you going to fill me in on that?" I asked, still laying on the bed. "Did you commit our souls to Malfiore or something?"

Nikki giggled. "Silly, our souls were already committed to Malfiore a long time ago. This just bound our souls together in Malfiore's eyes. When he sees us now, he will only see one."

"So in a weird way, we kinda sorta just got married?"'

Nikki shrugged. "I mean, if you want to be that formal about it."

I had to try hard not to laugh. What about this entire night didn't feel formal? Nikki was a strange one, but now she was *my* strange one. At least to Malfiore.

Once the incantation was given, Nikki started blowing out the candles and setting them to the side. She left the chalk outline of the pentagram on my floor, explaining that it would need to stay until daylight for the ritual to be completed. When that was finished, she crossed over to my bed and placed a kiss against my lips.

"And now we must sleep," she said. "Separately though, I'm afraid. If we give into temptation again tonight, the ritual will be ruined. But starting tomorrow, we'll be able to ravish each other as many times as we desire."

I was surprisingly okay with that. I was dead tired, and it was still the middle of the night. I didn't know if I could have gone again even if Nikki wanted to.

"Did you have a good time tonight?" asked Nikki against my lips.

"In a strange way, I did," I said. "What about you?"

She nodded and grinned at me. "I took a pink mushroom before I came in. That really heightened the whole process too."

Now that she mentioned it, I noticed her eyes seemed to be glowing redder than usual. It was hard to tell in the absence of light, but I could definitely see it now that she drew attention to it.

“Just don’t let Paulina catch you,” I warned.

“Don’t worry, it’s just for tonight.”

She kissed me sweetly before hopping off my bed and approaching the door.

“Uh, Nikki?” I asked, shaking the ropes. “Isn’t there something you’re forgetting?”

Nikki smacked the side of her face. “Oh, how silly of me!”

She moved back to her desk and picked up her spell book that was left behind. Then she hopped back over to the door. “Goodnight, lover!”

Chapter Nineteen

The next morning, Nikki kept giving me the same flirtatious glance every time our paths crossed. She looked like she was positively glowing, even to the point that Sadie asked her about it while we were eating breakfast.

“I just had a wonderful evening last night,” said Nikki coyly, throwing me a quick look before resuming her meal.

“Does this have anything to do with the pentagram in Kevin’s room?” asked Kennedi. “Because I never realized you were into such kinky shit!”

“What’s a pentagram?” asked sweet, innocent Cassidy.

“Well, you see Cassidy, when a man and a woman love each other, sometimes they have kinky sacrificial sex to their chosen demon lord,” said Kennedi, really hamming it up for her audience.

“Thanks for that lovely visual, Kennedi,” said Sadie, shaking her head.

“Is that true, Nikki?” asked Paulina. “Did you two go all the way last night?”

Her cover blown, Nikki owned it instead.

“We did, and it was absolutely thrilling and magical at the same time.”

The rest of the girls laughed, and both Sadie and Paulina leaned against me from either side. “Did you have an amazing time too, Kevin?” asked Sadie.

“I suppose I’m a committed disciple of Malfiore now,” I said. “But yes, I always enjoy my time with Nikki.”

“When do I get my turn?” asked Kennedi. “I want to have kinky sacrificial sex too!”

“Kennedi!” said Paulina suddenly. “You’re going to scare away Cassidy!”

Our attention turned to our innocent Cassidy, who was surprisingly smiley even after all that had been said.

“Whatever you want to do on your own time is fine with me,” said the brunette centaur. “Just leave some of Kevin for me too?”

Kennedi leaned over and kissed my cheek. “That’s the beautiful thing about human men. There’s plenty of him to go around!”

I found myself marveling at what my life had become. I looked around the table to see five different lovers, and one potential lover, all looking back at me. It was a life that I could have only dreamed about in my first life, but now that it was mine, I was loving every minute of it.

“Okay, okay, enough sex talk for now,” said Paulina. “It’s our first day on mayor duty! And we need to make a good impression today, okay?”

“Oh, come on, we’re going to kick ass y’all,” said Sadie, earning some hearty cheers in the process.

“I know we will, but I still want us to be careful,” said Paulina. “I don’t want any accidents, okay? I have the utmost confidence in our team, and hopefully this job leads to many great things.”

“After last night, I’m ready to take on the world,” promised Nikki.

Kennedi snorted. “Better believe I know that feeling too!”

With breakfast over, the girls finished getting dressed and prepared to leave for their new shift. I said goodbye to them in three waves, with Paulina and Cassidy leaving first to handle the mayor’s actual house. Bridgette, Kennedi, and Sadie left next, with Bridgette heading to the mayor’s son’s house while Kennedi and Sadie took on our normal duties. Lastly, Nikki left to handle the mayor’s mother’s house.

Once I was alone, I went about my normal routine. I had a few invoices that needed to be created for our regular clients, and that took the better part of an hour. After that, I went looking for more business on the forum, finding a very promising lead that I applied for along the way.

I finished off a few other odds and ends before checking on the hot tub that afternoon. I noticed the chemicals were starting to get low again, so I added some more alongside topping it off with additional water.

By the time the late afternoon arrived, I was looking forward to the girls returning home. I couldn’t wait to see how the first day went, and when Bridgette and Kennedi arrived first, I pestered them for details.

“It was a pretty standard house,” replied Bridgette. “Yes, there was bunny poop all over the place, but nothing I haven’t dealt with before. It wasn’t that bad. And I made sure that everything was back where I found it just like the instructions we were given.”

“What about you, Kennedi?” I asked the purple-haired vixen next to me. “How was your workload today?”

Kennedi blew a strand of hair out of her face. “Oh, about the usual. At least Bridgette was done early so we could tag team the rest of the jobs. It wasn’t a bad day despite the addition of the dick-head's—I mean the mayor’s family.”

I chuckled. “You still don’t like him, do you?”

She grinned and shook her head. “Nope, he burned a bridge with me forever.”

I was still laughing at her ability to be completely ridiculous and adorable at the same time when the other girls arrived home.

And that’s when I knew there was a problem. Especially since Nikki was crying and being consoled by Paulina.

“What’s wrong?” I asked.

“We have a little problem,” said Paulina. “Nikki broke something at the mother’s house.”

It took about ten minutes for me to get out exactly what happened from Nikki, mostly because she was crying so much while the other girls huddled around her to be supportive. After managing to piece together most of the story, I gave a recap of what I’d heard.

“So if I have this straight, you were cleaning the mayor’s mother’s house,” I said. “And then you went to clean the mantle above the fireplace, where the urn for the mayor’s father was resting, right?”

Paulina winced and nodded while Nikki failed to meet my eyes.

“And while dusting the urn, your arm flinched, which made accidental contact with the urn and sent it topping to the ground below, breaking it?”

Nikki let you a groan of frustration and nodded her head.

“Which understandably made the mayor’s mother freak out a little?”

Nikki met my eyes. “She called me worse than the plague.”

“So it’s safe to say you got off on the wrong foot,” said Kennedi.

“We never got on the right foot, especially after that,” said Nikki. “She kicked me out after that, and that’s not the worst part.”

Paulina took over from there. “I got a call from the mayor’s wife at that point demanding an explanation. I offered to pay for a replacement urn, but now the mayor wants to see us. And he’s definitely pissed.”

“Understandably so,” I replied. “Okay, we need to make sure we go see the mayor. We’re going to need to spend some time smoothing this over. Emotions are going to be running high over there, so we’ll have to be really delicate.”

Nikki buried her face in her hands. “This is all my fault. I suck! It was a total accident, but it never should have happened in the first place!”

I had to admit—I was surprised it was Nikki that broke something. I think we all expected something might eventually happen with Cassidy since she had so much trouble in the beginning.

I never would have pegged it as coming from our demon-worshiping dark elf.

“We’ll get it figured out,” Paulina promised her, as she gave me a knowing look. “Don’t worry, Nikki, we’ll be okay.”

We left Nikki to be consoled by the other girls as Paulina and I moved toward her office, shutting the door behind us. For the first time since she got home, we were able to speak candidly.

“So how bad is it?” I asked. “How screwed are we?”

Paulina shook her head. “We’re pretty screwed. I talked with the mayor’s wife. Well, I shouldn’t even say we talked. She screamed and I listened,

interjecting when I could. She couldn’t be more steamed, but at least we have one thing going for us.”

“What’s that?”

“At least the mayor still wants to meet with us,” she said. “That’s a promising sign. He wants to meet tomorrow, so hopefully they will have calmed down by then.”

“That’s still a tough sell,” I said. “How would you feel if you were in the same place?”

“Terrible. And ready to fire whoever was responsible.”

I groaned. “Looks like we have our work cut out for us.”

“We should practice what we need to say to him. At least we can be ready for the meeting when it happens.”

I opened my mouth to respond but closed it when Paulina’s phone rang. I saw her eyes go wide when she looked at the caller ID.

Gary Brooks. None other than the mayor himself.

She answered it with a shaky greeting. “H-hello?”

I couldn’t hear what the mayor was saying on the other end of the line, but I knew it wasn’t good. I could only judge Paulina’s responses, and I was starting to fear the worst.

“Uh huh, yes, it’s terrible. No, but we want to talk about it more,” said Paulina. “Yes, of course. Yes, I agree. But can we talk more? No meeting? But we really should sit—oh, okay. If you’re sure about that? Please, I really feel like we can come to a mutual—okay. Yes, I understand. I’m so sorry.”

By that point, the line went dead. Paulina now looked as shaken as Nikki did.

“He didn’t tell you it was just water under the bridge, did he?” I asked, already knowing the answer.

Paulina shook her head. “We’ve been fired. Our first day on the new job, and we’ve just been fired.”

Chapter Twenty

To say the house was in poor spirits that night was an understatement.

It was like someone died. And then someone had taken the urn with the ashes and dropped it on the floor.

Well, that was exactly what happened, and losing the mayor's job with all the opportunity that it entailed had shaken all of us. You could have heard a pin drop in our duplex that night.

Mostly, I didn't know what else to do. I was counting on an actual meeting with the mayor to smooth things over, but with us being fired over the phone unceremoniously, that took that option completely off the table.

I had no recourse to get back in front of him, though I knew it was the only way we could attempt to fix this.

"We need to go there anyway," I told Paulina right before we went to bed. "To tomorrow's meeting that was already set. We need to show up and have that meeting regardless of that phone call we received today."

"But he already fired us," said Paulina. "He's not going to let us come in after he's already fired us."

"Maybe not, but we still need to try," I said. "If we don't try, we'll never know. What happened today was clearly an accident. Things happen, but we've already offered to make it right the only way we know how."

I could tell that Paulina was already feeling defeated. "But what about his wife? He told us that she was very clear about her expectations. One screwup means that we can't do the job for them anymore."

"Yeah, but that's unrealistic," I said, shaking my head. "Like we're the first maid company that's ever broken something ever? No way. We're going to go there tomorrow and make this right. I promise you that. It's that little detail that will set us apart from the other maid companies out there."

Paulina put on a brave smile, but that was all I got. In hindsight, it was all I needed to see from her. Even if she'd written the mayor and his family off, I needed her support to give us through this.

We would need all the help we could get.

That night was mostly a sleepless one. Nobody was in the mood to fool around, not even Nikki after making flirty eyes at me the whole day. I woke up the next morning to see that I hadn't been tied to my bed and there was no sacrificial animal left near my pillow.

So I suppose you could say the day got off to a good start.

Breakfast was a hollow affair. Sadie tried to make smiley-face pancakes for all of us, but each time she tried to draw the smile with whipped cream, it came out more like a frown.

I didn't think it was by accident. Even the pancakes were upset about what happened to our fortunes.

After breakfast was over, Paulina and I waved goodbye to the rest of the girls while we decided how to handle the situation with the mayor.

"Let's get our business clothes on again," I told her. "We're going to give the plea of our lives, and we ought to look the part when we do so."

Paulina raised an eyebrow. "You sure we shouldn't go the beggar route? Try to make them feel bad about what happened?"

I shook my head. "No, that won't work. We have to come off apologetic but confident in our abilities. That's the only way we're going to keep this job."

Paulina let out a deep sigh. "I really hope you're right."

We dressed silently, with me picking a long-sleeved button-down shirt and a pair of slacks. I saw Paulina put on a dress with a really smart-looking blazer. She put her hair back in a ponytail—something that I always enjoyed because it exposed her very kissable neck.

She still looked incredibly nervous about the task that was in front of us, so before we left I grabbed her by the shoulders and forced her to look at me.

"We're going to be just fine," I told her. "More than fine actually. We're going to be great."

“I’m trying, I promise,” she said, biting her lip in frustration. It actually reminded me of Cassidy, when she needed a pick-me-up.

“I can only do this if you’re right there next to me,” I said, smiling at her. “You got my back?”

To my relief, Paulina nodded. “I have your backside and your frontside. All your sides.”

I kissed her. “Damn straight you do, baby.”

She giggled. “Okay, let’s get this over with. Let’s go save our company . . . again.”

We left the house with more pep in our step than we had when we started the day. We were lucky in that the weather outside was beautiful, and although it didn’t match our moods, I was hopeful that it was a good sign of what was to come.

Unfortunately, the good signs disappeared when we actually got to the mayor’s floor inside his office, only to find our way blocked by his assistant—a young orc woman of about twenty-five or so.

“I’m sorry, you have to have an appointment to see Mr. Brooks,” she said, shaking her head.

“We were just here actually,” I said. “Do you remember us from the other day? We signed on to be the mayor’s new maid service company. Goblin Girl Maid Service?”

She flinched like she knew exactly who we were. “I’m sorry, but I don’t remember you.”

“Just look at your calendar from two days ago,” I said. “It’s all there, I promise you.”

“No, sorry,” she said, clearly experienced in turning away unexpected guests. “You’ll have to call ahead next time for an appointment.”

“Please?” I said, changing my tone to one that was a lot softer and almost apologetic. “Listen, there was a terrible mix-up yesterday. I know the mayor probably doesn’t want to see us, but we need to make this right. We’re determined to make this right for him and his family. It’s of utmost importance that we speak to him.”

I’d love to say that my passionate plea was enough to get the woman to change her mind. When I pictured all of this in my head, I saw her being blown away by my reasoning skills that were coupled with an apologetic expression. She’d whisk me in to see the mayor, interrupting whatever meeting he was in, and we’d be able to save the day.

That’s not exactly what happened though.

“Yeah, security?” she asked, picking up the receiver. “I need you up here right now.”

There must have been one of those cartoon trap doors somewhere on the floor, because two burly trolls with shirts that were way too tight for their bodies walked into the room seconds later. They barricaded the way into the mayor’s office while looking at me with dark expressions.

“Time to go,” said one of them. “If you know what’s good for you.”

I opened my mouth to keep fighting but I felt Paulina’s sudden pressure against my arm.

“Come on,” she whispered. “This isn’t going to work. We have to try another way.”

I knew Paulina was right. Besides, I didn’t envision getting my ass kicked by a bunch of muscle-heads when I woke up this morning.

Besides, I knew there was more than one way to get into the mayor’s office. It just meant we had to be a little creative.

The trolls escorted us off the premises, slamming the door shut behind them. I was tempted to yell at them, but I needed to focus.

“Okay, so now what?” asked Paulina. “Any other ideas? Because I don’t have anything else besides maybe calling him?”

“He probably won’t pick up,” I said. “No, we need to find a dragon.”

Paulina’s eyes went wide. “A dragon? For what?”

I gave her a determined look. “We need to hitch a ride.”

“Are you sure about this, Kevin?”

Paulina’s voice was meant to be loud, but I could barely hear it over the sound of air rapidly moving past my ear. We were already building up airspeed, and I could feel her grip around my waist tighten as we soared through the downtown streets of Dragonmont City.

“A little too late for that!” I said back to her. “We’re almost there!”

I tapped the back of the dragon and pointed to the mayor’s balcony a short distance away. “That’s it right there! Just let us off on that balcony and we’ll take it from there.”

The dragon craned his head back at me. “Are you sure your friend is expecting you, sir? I don’t usually get such odd requests like dropping people off at a balcony of all places. Why didn’t you try the front door?”

“Oh, don’t worry about that,” I said, waving my hand. “Trust me, my friend likes surprises. He’ll get a kick out of it if we come in through the balcony!”

The dragon didn’t look particularly convinced, but seeing as he’d already been paid, he didn’t say a word. His wings flapped harder and harder until we gained enough altitude to make the balcony. The dragon did one pass by as he slowed down before finally making a dive to nail the landing.

“Hold on tight, passengers,” he said. “This might get a little bumpy!”

He wasn’t kidding. When his feet hit the balcony, his wings gave a little shudder as he tried to stop completely. We were jerked forward suddenly, but thanks to our position on his back, we didn’t go anywhere. As soon as he slowed down, he flapped his wings one more time, allowing us the chance to disembark before anything else had happened.

“Well, here you are,” he said. “Thank you for choosing me for your transportation. Enjoy your day!”

With one more flap of his wings, he leapt into the air and disappeared as quickly as he landed.

“He must have been in a hurry,” I told Paulina.

“I think he knows we’re not supposed to be here,” said Paulina, pointing her finger at the glass doors on the other side of the balcony.

I craned my head and made direct eye contact with Gary Brooks, who had his hands planted firmly on his hips. He did *not* look excited to see us.

“What in the name of Valushasa are two doing here?” he asked.

I had no idea who Valushasa was but now wasn’t the time to ask irrelevant questions. Now was the time to put our plan into motion.

“Mr. Brooks, we need to speak with you immediately,” I said, crossing the balcony and holding out my hand. He didn’t take it. Instead, he glared at me.

“Why should I speak with you? After what you did yesterday, what more could possibly be said?”

“Mr, Brooks, please,” said Paulina, who had joined my side. “What happened yesterday was a terrible accident. We meant no disrespect to your father, I promise. And we’ll do anything we can to make it right by you.”

“Is that right?” he snarled. “Can you magically repair the urn and put my father’s ashes back inside?”

“We can *replace* the urn and get him back inside,” I said. “I understand that it’s a family connection and there’s an emotional attachment to it, but we’re determined to make things right.”

Gary let out a deep sigh and looked back inside his office. He seemed to relent and gestured for us to follow him inside.

“Come in and have a seat,” he said. “Do you want anything to drink?”

His tone changed so quickly that I found myself a little confused. I wasn’t expecting him to turn around this fast.

“Um, no, that’s okay,” I said, something that Paulina echoed.

Gary moved toward a cabinet on the other side of his office, pulling out a bottle of something that looked quite dark, kind of like whiskey. He poured himself half a glass and returned to his seat.

“You can’t imagine the kind of trouble you two have put me in,” he said, taking a sip of his beverage. “Do you know how much my wife was on my ass about this last night? She’s positively furious about the whole thing!

And I don’t know why! It’s not like it was her father’s ashes that got scattered on the floor like some cheap fertilizer!”

I winced at the imagery but didn’t interrupt. I let him keep talking, thinking it was the best course for now.

Gary shook his head. “My mother was beside herself at first too, but she calmed down once he was off the floor. It was the worst thing you could have done, you know? You’ve turned the two most important women in my life against me.”

“We can earn back their trust,” I said. “This doesn’t have to be the end of our partnership.”

“Listen, the decision isn’t that easy,” said Gary, especially as he pulled something out of his desk drawer and put it on the table. “I’m not the kind of guy that would drop you over something like this, but my wife? She’s got a one-strike-you’re-out rule that is positively vicious if you’re on the wrong side of it. And she already knows who she’s going to replace you with.”

I had a feeling I already knew what was on the other side of that paper. I craned my neck slightly to see if I could see what was written across the top, but it was just too blurry to make out. The rest of it though, it definitely looked familiar.

It looked like a quote from another maid service company.

“My wife found these people last night and she wants to give them a chance,” explained Gary. “They beat you on price, and they do have the luxury of not breaking something on their very first day.”

“May I see that quote?” asked Paulina. “Just out of curiosity?”

Gary shrugged and slid it forward. Paulina snatched it and held it closer to me so I could read it too.

It was exactly what I suspected. The quote was from Extravagant Home Services. As demoralizing as it was to see their name on the top of the quote, what was even worse was seeing that they crushed out pricing by a third.

How were we supposed to compete with that?

“It appears they are the largest maid service company in the entire city,” said Gary. “And their prices are very cheap. It’d consider keeping your company if you could match their pricing.”

Paulina shook her head. “I don’t see a way we could come anywhere close to this. This is the bottom of the barrel. I can’t match this.”

Gary reached across the table and grabbed the quote. “I guess that settles it then. If you two don’t mind, I have some work I need to get back to.”

He looked sympathetic to our plight but ultimately, Gary was going to do what he felt was best. And that meant hiring EHS and everything that went with it.

I was numb as I pushed up from my seat and approached the door. I could see tears in Paulina’s eyes, which pained me more than I wanted to admit. I knew what losing the mayor’s business meant—we would be struggling for some time with no cash reserves.

Part of me wondered if we should call off the office acquisition and just go back to square one.

The shitty part was that all of this was happening while our competitors were getting stronger, and now that meant that they’d stolen business right out from under us.

The more I looked at Paulina’s upset face, the angrier I became. I couldn’t let things end like this.

Not after all the good that we’ve done.

Before the door could close, I stuck my arm inside and threw it open once again. The door hit the opposite wall hard, creating a loud enough sound that made the mayor jump in his seat on the other side of the room.

“We’re not done here just yet,” I said defiantly, marching my way back to his desk. “I think you deserve to know just who you’re getting in bed with.”

Gary looked confused, but he wasn’t the only one. I could see that Paulina also seemed to be silently questioning what I was doing. I reached across to squeeze her hand, trying to reassure her that I hadn’t lost my marbles.

“What are you talking about?” asked Gary. “I know who we’re choosing to go with. EHS is a known company.”

“You better believe they’re *known*,” I said. “They’ve been buying up maid service companies all over the city. And they’re known to do the worse possible job out of anyone. Have you checked their reviews?”

Gary stammered. “Well, no, not personally.”

“I think you deserve to see them. And then you can make a real decision based on what other people have said about working with them,” I said.

I commandeered Gary’s computer, mostly while he looked on in shock. I don’t think he was prepared for how passionate we were about this, but it made me proud to fight for our business in such a way.

This was our dream. And I was going to do everything possible to make it last for the rest of our lives.

I pulled up the Stoogle Reviews and started going through them one by one.

“One star review,” I read. “Maids were disorganized, sloppy, and broke things repeatedly until I fired them.” I turned to look at Gary. “Is that the kind of maid service you want to jump in bed with?”

Gary didn’t say anything, but I could tell his attention had moved to the computer as he started to scan the reviews too.

“Another one star review,” I said, reading another. “My maid acted like she’d never held a broom before. I tried to complain to the ownership, but they never responded to my phone calls. Never again! Here’s another one star. Maid was unkempt and refused to do even basic tasks. Save your money!”

I kept going down the line until I felt like Gary was as fully invested as I was. I could *feel* his attitude starting to change, moving from one of indifference to outrage at what he was reading.

And it seemed like there was no shortage of bad reviews either.

By the time we reached the bottom, I could tell Gary was now seriously questioning his decision. I had to do one more thing though just to try and keep this moving in the right direction.

“Listen, we’re familiar with this EHS company too,” I said. “They’ve been buying up maid services companies all over the city, trying to consolidate everything into one massive corporation. That’s why their prices are so low. They want to drive everyone else out of the city.”

“But I don’t understand how anyone that’s acquired that many different companies and probably different maids has that bad of reviews,” said Gary. “Where is all the experience at the company?”

“It’s because they let go of all the good maids,” said Paulina quietly. “We know because we’ve hired one that left them because they didn’t want to pay her. They keep the bad maids, pay them poorly, and this is the result. You truly get what you pay for in this business, and they’re just not worth it.”

The mayor slammed his hand on the table. “Well, that’s just despicable! How could anyone work with people like that?”

“It’s what’s going to happen if people keep ignoring the little companies and going for the big ones,” said Paulina. “Little companies like ours.”

One look into Gary’s face told me that we’d converted him. He grabbed his phone and stood up from his seat.

“I need to talk to my wife about this,” he said, pointing toward the balcony. “You two wait here. You might want to cross your fingers while you’re at it. She’s going to make the final decision.”

“Good luck,” said Paulina brightly, though I could tell that she was just as nervous as I was.

It was nerve-racking to put on the sales pitch of our life to the mayor, even after we were down for the count. Now it was positively maddening to watch him now try to sell his wife on us again, after she’d made her feelings known very clearly.

We watched from behind the glass as he reached her and began to speak. Unfortunately, we had no idea what was being said, leaving us as nervous wrecks until the call had ended.

“Do you think this is going to work?” Paulina asked me as her hand snuck back into mine.

I put on a brave face for her benefit. “It has to. I believe in this, Paulina. I really do.”

I knew my answer would help her settle a little, but it didn’t quell the anxiety that I had in my gut. Especially when it looked like their conversation was becoming more animated.

Minutes felt like hours as we waited for the final results. When Gary finally put his cell phone away, I found that I was holding my breath as we awaited the news. He marched toward the door and opened it, his face entirely unreadable.

When he sat down without saying a word, I thought the worst. I thought that he wasn’t able to convince her. But when Gary looked us in the eye seconds later, everything changed.

“We’re going to stay with Goblin Girl Maid Service,” said Gary, a small smile breaking out on his face. “You’ve made a very convincing pitch about your competition. And we don’t want to take what seems to be a giant risk in using them. But there’s two conditions!”

“Anything,” said Paulina. “What are they?”

“You replace the urn that my father was in,” said Gary, ticking off his fingers. “And secondly, don’t send that elf to clean my mother’s place again. I can’t vouch for her safety if you do. My mother can be just as hostile as my wife. Can you meet those conditions?”

Paulina and I didn’t even need to discuss. We reached our hands across the table.

“You’ve got yourself a deal, Mr. Mayor,” I said proudly.

Chapter Twenty-One

“YOU DID IT? You did it! Holy zander nuts, you actually freakin’ did it!”

There was nothing short of euphoria when we arrived back at the duplex that morning, carrying the good news about what happened. All the girls had reason to celebrate, and as usual, Kennedi took it just one step too far by breaking out the bubbly.

“But Kennedi, it’s barely ten-thirty,” said Paulina with a laugh, as a full glass of champagne was pushed into her hand.

“Who gives a fuck?” replied Kennedi, pouring until the bottle was empty. “Our business is saved! We still get our office and we’ve poked the big predatory corporation in the eye! That’s more than enough reason to celebrate!”

“That’s going to be interesting to see how that plays out,” said Sadie. “What’s going to happen when EHS finds out we stole a customer from them?”

Sadie brought up a good point. Until this point, I wasn’t sure if EHS was even aware of our existence. After today, they would surely know what had just happened with such a high-profile customer like the mayor.

And how were they going to respond?

“Oh, fuck EHS,” said Bridgette, giggling after she drank from her glass. “They can consider this karma for all the people they’ve fucked over.”

“Yeah, I curse them in front of Malfiore,” agreed Nikki, drinking from her glass.

Hearing Nikki’s voice reminded me of one of the conditions. I pulled her aside to let her know that she couldn’t be working on the mayor’s properties anymore. I expected that she would have a bad reaction to it, or at least question whether or not she was any good, but Nikki took the news in stride.

“That’s okay,” she said, waving her hand dismissively. “I have a distinct feeling that their entire family is a servant of Buchita anyway.”

“Buchita?” I repeated, having no idea what she was talking about.

Nikki smacked my shoulder playfully like I was joking around. “Don’t play like you don’t know who Buchita is. You know, the archenemy of Malfiore? The demon lord that fought a hundred-year-long war with Malfiore? Oh, you’re just messing with me, aren’t you, Kevin?”

“Just testing you,” I said. “You know, to make sure you were really devoted to Malfiore.”

She giggled and wormed her way into my lap. “See, this is why we’ve given our lives together to Malfiore. But either way, I just had this nagging suspicion about them. Anyway, Malfiore wouldn’t like it if I continued to work on their house, so everything is just fine.”

“Well, that was almost too easy,” I said, expecting more upset feelings.

Nikki leaned in closer. “Do you want me to do a curse on them just in case? I know a few spells that would be perfect for Buchita worshipers.”

“Nah, let’s just continue to believe that Malfiore will get his ultimate revenge in the end,” I said, tapping her shoulder.

Nikki beamed with a smile. “Great idea! You know, today calls for more than just champagne. I’m going to order a pizza!”

Nikki bolted up and ran to the phone, and I could soon hear her ordering from her former place of business.

“You know, I think it’s really funny how you handle her,” said a familiar voice from the door.

I turned to see Bridgette, who was standing next to the frame with her arms crossed. Of course, the older goblin always found some way to look seductive, especially as she raised an eyebrow at me before closing the distance between us.

“You really have no idea of anything about this Malfiore guy, do you?” she asked, not stopping until her arms were resting on my shoulders.

“Only what I’ve been able to guess from talking to Nikki,” I said cheekily. “But it helps me bond with her, so I don’t mind it. I get the impression that not many people would be able to otherwise.”

“This is exactly what I like about you,” said Bridgette. “It’s like you mold yourself to whatever girl you’re with. When you’re with Paulina, you’re all business and serious, because that’s what she needs. When you’re with Nikki, you’re the perfect servant to Malfiore. You’re a little crazy with Kennedi, and you deal with my personality just as well. You’re like the ultimate boyfriend, do you know that?”

I’d never really considered that before, but I wasn’t sure I agreed with her. None of this was a conscious decision on my part. I think it just came with the territory. I wanted to be the best boyfriend for all my girls, and I think this was just the natural result.

“I only want all of you to be happy,” I said. “At the end of the day, if I’ve done that, there’s not much else I can complain about.”

Bridgette smiled and then she kissed me. “I’d say you’ve succeeded beyond your wildest dreams.”

I couldn’t explain how great that made me feel. I gave Bridgette a few more smooches before we rejoined the rest of the group, where I found out the good news just kept piling in today.

It was Paulina clutching a phone that brought our next round of positivity. As soon as she hung up, she started bouncing up and down, doing her own little dance in our living room.

“What’s going on?” I asked her. “More good news!”

“The renovations for our new office are over sooner than expected!” she announced. “It’s ready for us! We can start moving in right away!”

Several cheers went up from all of us at the prospect of starting the next chapter of Goblin Girl Maid Service.

“We should go see it today!” said Cassidy, her tail swishing around excitedly. “We can start planning the layout for it!”

“And we need to go shopping,” added Sadie. “We’ll all need desks and possibly computers. And maybe some nice plants for the ambiance!”

“We’re definitely going to need a gaming station in there too,” said Kennedi, who earned a stare from the rest of us until she shrugged. “What? I’m thinking about break time.”

“If you’re going to do that, you might as well throw in a bed too,” said Bridgette. “For when we really need to ‘decompress’ with our handsome CHO.”

“Whatever you girls need, I’m game,” I said, making them all laugh. “But I agree with Cassidy. Let’s go see our new space!”

We finished off the bottle of champagne before we made our way over to our new office. Paulina had made an arrangement to leave the keys at the front reception desk, which we picked up before entering the elevators to go to our floor.

“This is so exciting,” said Sadie, putting her hands together. “If this is still real, pinch me!”

Two seconds later, I heard Sadie let out a loud yell. I turned around to find her rubbing her arm and to see Kennedi smiling innocently.

“It’s just a figure of speech, Kennedi!” shouted Sadie.

“Oh, was it?” asked Kennedi, batting her eyelashes. “Sorry, I didn’t realize!”

The elevator doors popped open and we stood facing our new space. Paulina unlocked the door and we all spilled into it just like it was the first time.

“Such a beautiful view from up here!” said Nikki, looking around. “So much space for a seance to Malfiore!”

“And maybe even a little office gym over here,” said Bridgette. “You know, so we can stay nice and toned.”

“I thought that was what Kevin was for,” said Kennedi. “When we need our cardio?”

“Either or,” replied Bridgette, giggling.

I entered the area that would be my own office, staring out the window at Dragonmont City. I marveled at how far we’d come in a relatively short time, and I knew that the future would only get better from here.

“It’s a perfect space for the boss,” came a voice from behind me.

I felt arms wrap around my waist suddenly, and when I saw a flash of dark hair and hooves, I knew it was Cassidy.

“What do you think about all this?” I asked her. “Everything you thought it would be?”

“I’ll be honest—I still get nervous at times,” she said. “But now that I’ve been here long enough, this is starting to feel more like home.”

“I want you to know that we feel the same way about you,” I said. “I talked to Paulina this morning about your parents.”

Cassidy bit her lip. “You did?”

To my surprise, Paulina entered the room and burrowed her way into my side. “He did. And Kevin told me that he thought you needed a change. A permanent change.”

I saw hope springing into Cassidy’s eyes. “What kind of change?”

I glanced at Paulina before we both turned to face Cassidy. “We want to invite you to move into our duplex. We want to make it official. We’ll have some extra space now with the business portion moving into the office, so we wanted to make sure you knew you always had a home with us. That you had a real family that cares about you.”

Tears of happiness appeared in Cassidy’s eyes. Tears that warmed my heart to no end. Before I knew what was happening, she rushed in to hug both of us at the same time, squeezing us as tightly as she could manage.

“Thank you, thank you, thank you!” she gushed, her voice sounding weak. “You don’t know what this means to me.”

“Good things should happen to good people,” I told her. “After today, I firmly believe that to be the case. So what do you think? Is that a yes?”

Cassidy leaned up on her toes and kissed me. The action was so out of the blue that it made Paulina laugh.

“That’s your answer!” she said quickly.

Paulina giggled. “So there’s only one question we have left.”

“What’s that?”

“When are you moving in?”

Cassidy brought her finger to her lips in a way that was completely adorable. “Uh, let me think. Today!”

I grabbed each woman by the waist and pulled them close. I couldn’t say how long we stood there, just looking out the window at the magical city in front of us. Soon enough, I felt two heads rest on either shoulder, and it made me so grateful to have them there.

When I looked at Paulina, I saw someone who was so much more than just my trusty business partner. I saw someone that I loved, someone with whom I’d been with through thick and thin. I loved her, and I was incredibly proud of the company we’d built.

When I looked at Cassidy, I saw the future. I saw someone whom I would one day love, someone with whom represented just what Goblin Girl Maid Service could become. We might still be taking things one day at a time, but each day was getting better than the one before.

And I knew the best was yet to come.

Book 3 is coming very soon!

Goblin Girl Maid Service 3

A Slice-of-Life Fantasy Adventure

Chapter One

If anyone would have told me that I'd be taking regular phone calls from the orc mayor of Dragonmont City, Gary Brooks, I wouldn't have just called them crazy.

I would have demanded to know what they were smoking.

And yet, that was the case now that I was nearly six months into my reborn life in the fantasy metropolis of Dragonmont City.

And I had to admit—life was going pretty well.

"Do you think you can squeeze in my cousin's place too?" asked Gary, talking to me while I walked through the doors of our new office building. "Listen, I'm going to be really honest with you, Kevin. He's a slob. He still suffers from that bloodthirsty rage that affects most orcs."

"What exactly does that mean, Gary?" I asked as I tried not to wince. "My maids aren't going to find body parts in his apartment, are they?"

"Body parts? Oh, no, no, no. Of course not," said Gary, though his tone seemed to indicate that he wasn't too sure about his answer. "I mean, listen, Cousin Thaddeus has some rough edges around him, but it's not like he's breaking the law. Is he a liability? Yes, and my wife chattered about it endlessly when I ran for mayor last year."

"Back to the apartment though," I said, chuckling as I entered the glass doors of our office after a short ride on the elevator. I waved to our receptionist, a fluffy-eared catgirl named Misty that was incredibly sweet and a more recent hire of the company. She passed two scraps of paper over to me, and then she purred when I scratched behind her ears. "Am I going to find anything in this apartment that would make my maids uncomfortable?"

"Not at all," swore Gary. "I mean you might find a few specks of blood on the floor from time to time, but that's only because Thaddeus is part of his own fight club with his band of orc friends. I promise you that everything is legit."

“That doesn’t sound exactly legit,” I said, walking into our bright and airy main office space and waving to Bridgette, who was getting changed a short distance away in order to start her shift.

“It’s a gray area in the law, admittedly,” relented Gary. “But it’s not illegal. And I’ll pay double if you can add his place in three times a week. Trust me, he’s going to need it.”

“Double?” I questioned. “Gary, that’s a lot of money.”

“You’d be doing me a huge favor,” replied the orc mayor. “And there’s no finer company in the entire city for maid service. You won’t believe what my wife said about you just last night. She said that your company has been the success story of the decade. Can you believe that?”

“That does sound hard to believe,” I said, remembering that it was Gary’s wife that tried to have us fired a few months back. It was a fight to maintain our hard-fought contract, but in the end, we became the only maid service company in the city that worked with the mayor and his family.

And now it was spreading to his extended family. Just his contract alone was nearly worth what we made at the Beauman Hotel, and that was for twenty luxury apartments!

This new addition for the mayor’s cousin could seriously help our efforts to grow the company.

“I’ll tell you what, Gary, we’ll take on your cousin,” I told him. “I’ll talk to Paulina about it, and we’ll have it started this week. How does that sound?”

I could hear the mayor let out a sigh of relief. “Thank Valushasa for Goblin Girl Maid Service,” said Gary. “You saved my ass, especially when it comes to my mother. I never would have heard the end of that.”

“Well, you tell Hilda that I said hi,” I said, referencing his mother. “And that we love working with her.”

“The feeling is mutual, believe me!” said Gary. “Bye, Kevin! Thanks again!”

I could only shake my head and smile as I hung up the phone. To see not only the business but my relationship with the mayor come this far was nothing short of miraculous.

“What was that all about?” asked Bridgette, now fully dressed in her maid outfit as she made her way closer to me. She kissed me sweetly and nodded her head toward my phone.

“Just got us another new job,” I said. “The orc mayor’s black-sheep cousin by the sounds of it.”

Bridgette smirked. “Add him to the list. Speaking of which, that list is getting quite long now. We might need to hire more girls.”

“I think Paulina is one step ahead of you,” I said. “We have new girls starting today. Or maybe tomorrow. I forget which one, but I think there will be four of them coming.”

Bridgette opened her mouth. “Oh, lovely! Fresh meat!”

“Now, Bridge, you gotta be nice to them.”

“I know, but it’s nice not being the low one on the totem pole anymore,” she said.

“Actually, I’m pretty sure that’s still Nikki,” I joked, thumbing my finger over at the kitchens, where I could see Nikki was already pestering the cook. “I better go save the cook before Nikki scares him off like she did the last one.”

Bridgette snorted. “Good luck.”

The kitchens had been another upgrade that I was exceptionally proud about. When we first took over the office space, there was a very meager kitchenette that was already built into it, but it was clear that the last tenants hadn’t used the space. With all the new contracts that we’d secured, we were able to do a full remodel that allowed us to use the space for its original purpose.

And that meant that everyone that worked at Goblin Girl Maid Service got a free lunch on a daily basis.

Well, as long as we could keep a cook. The first one had lasted about two weeks before she resigned, citing that it wasn’t a good fit for her. That had

caught me by surprise, and it led to me paying more attention to the kitchens than I did before. The next cook almost lasted a month before he too caved, and as he was leaving, he made it very clear what the issue was.

“It’s that damned dark elf!” said the cook, a lazy-eyed troll with a handlebar mustache. “She insists that she can cook better than me! I’ve won the city’s top culinary award, and I’m not going to be told how to cook by a simpleton!”

Okay, in hindsight, he probably wasn’t the best fit either. That cook was notoriously fussy, and I wasn’t about to stomach anyone insulting my girls.

However, when this new cook was hired, I wanted to make sure I kept an eye on Nikki. And right now, I could see her hovering perilously close to the pizza dough that was being rolled out.

“No, no, it’s too thick,” said Nikki, snapping her fingers as she tried to commandeer the roller. “Really good elvish pizza has to be thin crust. That’s not going to cook once you put it in.”

“Then I’ll just leave it in for longer,” said the cook, a siren with silver hair by the name of Gina. Personally, I thought she was a great fit, and she had a remarkable amount of patience for the job.

Nikki pouted. “But then the pheasant will dry out. That simply won’t do.”

I put my arm around Nikki. “Why don’t we let Gina cook the way she wants to cook? She came highly recommended and everything she has cooked has been amazing so far.”

Gina beamed with a smile. “Thank you, Kevin! Do you really like my cooking that much?”

I flashed a thumbs-up. “That meatloaf you made yesterday was simply divine.”

Gina grinned as she rolled out more dough silently. Before Nikki could say another word, I pulled her away from the kitchens and out of Gina’s hair.

“I just want all of us to have the best elvish pizza around,” whined Nikki as I walked her back to her changing locker. “And I see a lot of areas where she can improve.”

“It’s okay, Nikki, really,” I said. “Besides, you don’t make pizzas anymore. You’re a maid now, and you’re a damn good one.”

Her eyes flashed with excitement. “Really? You really think I’ve become a damn good maid?”

Okay, maybe “damn good” was a stretch. In all honesty, Nikki ought to be happy that she’d broken into the middle of the pack. She’d never be as good as Paulina or Bridgette, but she had shown so much growth since we brought her on months ago. And I was proud of the work she did today.

“One hundred percent,” I answered. “So let Gina be the cook and you be the maid. How does that sound?”

Nikki crossed her arms and flipped her ponytail over her shoulder. “Alright, I suppose. If worse comes to worst, I guess we could always have Malfiore curse her and her family. Especially if we get food poisoning or something.”

I leaned closed. “If that happens, I’ll fully sanction the great Malfiore’s involvement. And a curse on her family will be very appropriate. And maybe a dash of bubonic plague for good measure.”

Nikki grinned. “I love how you just *get* me.” She let out a deep breath. “Okay, I’m going to go change for the next apartment. May Malfiore watch over you, my love.”

“Right back at you, babe,” I said, walking away.

Part of what bonded Nikki and I together was our shared reverence for the demon lord, Malfiore. Worshiped as a god by Nikki, I never even heard of the entity until Nikki entered my life. Originally, I treated the demon lord as a joke, but I only realized how seriously she took it after a midnight seance that turned into an unholy sex romp.

Don’t get me wrong—my allegiance to Malfiore was more lip service than anything else, but I knew how important it was to Nikki, and so I went to great lengths to keep up appearances.

After I left Nikki’s locker, I made my way back toward the main space. Before I got there, I heard gaming sounds coming from a separate room—an area that we’d converted into a full-time break room. Naturally, it

became a gaming space, and the two most frequent operators of that space were Kennedi and Sadie.

And it appeared that after they were done with their morning shift, they decided to burn off a little steam by getting back to business.

“Ha!” said Kennedi, laughing as she raised her controller in the air. “Suck on those nuts, bitch. How does it feel to eat my dust the entire way?”

Sadie pursed her lips and shook her head. “You cheated. I saw you zoom down that side street and cut the angle off that last turn.”

“No way, you’re just salty that I beat you again,” said Kennedi, grinning from ear to ear.

“What are you two playing now?” I asked, walking into the room to see cars on the screen. “What happened to *Hearts of Iron 4*?”

“Meh, we got bored of playing it,” said Kennedi, waving her hand.

“More like Kennedi got tired of me whopping her ass,” corrected Sadie. “So now we’ve moved onto *Grand Theft Auto Online*.”

“And it’s so much more my style,” said Kennedi. “Want to watch us race? If Sadie loses this next race, I’ll make her give you head.”

Sadie blew a raspberry. “More like when you lose, you’re going to give him head.”

“You two make it sound like a punishment to give me head,” I joked.

The girls looked at each other and shrugged. “He’s right. Maybe we ought to make the winner do it?”

“I think we’ve put our foot in our mouths,” said Sadie.

Kennedi brightened considerably. She turned toward me. “Do you want to watch me put my foot in my mouth? That’s hot, right?”

I could only laugh. “It’s okay, I’m good with not getting head right now.”

“See? You offended him,” said Sadie, getting out of her seat and putting her arms around me. “Forgive us. We didn’t mean anything by it.”

“Don’t worry about anything,” I said, kissing her. “And don’t let me interrupt game time. Have fun, and I’ll catch up with you later.”

Kennedi waved at me and then glared at Sadie. “Grab your sticks, bitch. Let’s settle this.”

I shook my head as I walked out of the room. Those two would never change, but I wouldn’t have it any other way. I kept walking down the hall, stopping to enter Paulina’s large corner office. Bright and airy like the rest of the space, it had an amazing view of downtown Dragonmont City. Glittering buildings and blue skies filled the view outside the windows. It overlooked the central square of the city, where bright lights and billboards could be seen. Even from my vantage point, I could see a billboard for some kitsune lawyer holding a gavel and promising to get you out of any trouble that you were in.

But for me, the best part of the office was a map that Paulina had hanging from the wall.

It was a map of all of our clients within the city. At one time, there were only a couple pins on the map, but today there were over twenty of them, each representing a property that we serviced. Some of those properties were only single-family homes while others represented an entire complex, such as the Beauman.

It was testament to how far we’d come in such a short period of time, and it filled me with immense pride every time we were able to add a pin to the map.

Of course, none of it would be possible without the gorgeous goblin girl sitting behind the main desk. Paulina was the queen of the roost, the founder and CEO of Goblin Girl Maid Service. She was the rock of the business, but behind her incredible business acumen was a soft, intelligent, and caring woman that I was completely in love with.

Paulina was on the phone when I arrived, but she still grinned and waved at me while talking. From the sounds of it, she was also working on a brand new deal.

“I can’t accept a bid lower than twenty opals per day,” said Paulina into the phone. “I won’t be talked into anything lower. Is that going to be an issue?”

I snuck behind her as she talked, putting my hands on her shoulders and gently rubbing them. Part of me really enjoyed seeing this side of her—the astute businesswoman that could work a room without showing any signs of fluster.

It was also incredibly sexy to me as well.

“The reason is because we’re better than them,” said Paulina, sitting back in her chair and putting her hand against her stomach. “I don’t need to match their rates, Steph. Have you seen their work? Or read their reviews online? They’re terrible. Their maids are barely trained before they’re thrown out there to do work. It’s an insult to the industry if you ask me.”

I watched as she nodded her head a few more times. It was very cute to me to see how she acted, nodding her head while the conversation progressed even though the person on the other line couldn’t see her. It was something that Paulina did frequently—a personality quirk that I loved.

“So we have a deal?” she asked, flashing a smile at me. “Four apartments? Starting next week? Sounds like a plan, Steph. Pleasure doing business with you. Okay, take care. Bye.”

She hung up the phone and gave me the widest grin I’d ever seen. “Four more apartments for us! Can you believe that?”

“Make it five,” I said, right as she stood up and rushed over to hug me. “I spoke with Gary just now. We’re getting his cousin’s place too.”

“You’re being serious, aren’t you? We really got one more from the mayor?”

“Well, it might be a little interesting,” I said, doing my best not to laugh. “From what Gary said, his cousin doesn’t exactly fit the picture-perfect life of politics, but he at least guaranteed me we wouldn’t find anything illegal.”

Paulina put her hand up. “You know what, I don’t even want to know.”

I laughed and kissed her. “It’s all good. He was gushing on the phone with me. I used to think it was his wife that would be the death of that contract, but they love us more than ever.”

“Because you’re a great negotiator,” she said. “And an amazing Chief Handsome Officer.”

“What can I say, baby,” I teased. “We’re the best. We’ve taken the city by storm, and now everyone wants their own goblin maid.”

“You know, I’d be tempted to think you were exaggerating, but you’re not that far off,” said Paulina, pulling out a small stack of papers from her desk. “All these leads have arrived in the last two days. All people that want to be serviced by us.”

“Add two more to that,” I said, putting the leads from Misty on her desk. “We’re popular.”

“And we need new girls more than anything,” said Paulina. “I have four of them starting tomorrow.”

“Oh, that’s tomorrow? I forgot which day it was.”

“Yep, boot camp starts tomorrow,” teased Paulina.

“Don’t forget your helmet and your baton,” I said. “I can’t wait to see my drill instructor up there teaching them how to be proper maids. You run the best training program for maids ever.”

“Sweet-talking will get you everywhere, my love,” she said while pressing tender kisses against my lips.

“I’ll do or say anything just to get a kiss from you.”

Her eyes flashed with mischief. “What if I don’t want to stop at a kiss?”

This was the part of my life that I just loved—the little moments with Paulina, or one of the other girls, where we could truly put the business behind us and just have fun. It was unlike anything that I remembered from my old life—the bleakness of all of it, the uncertainty of regular living.

Being in Dragonmont City was the closest thing to heaven that I would ever know. And it was all thanks to Paulina and our chance meeting.

“You’re thinking again, aren’t you?” she asked, sensing that my wheels were turning inside my head. “What are you thinking about, baby?”

“Just all the things that I’d love to do with you tonight,” I said. “Because I intend to take you up on that offer.”

As soon as I said that, something strange happened. I saw a brief moment of excitement in her eyes, but it didn’t last for very long. Instead, a weird expression appeared, one that I couldn’t read very easily, and it troubled me from the moment I saw it.

“What’s wrong?” I asked. “Your mood changed all of a sudden.”

Paulina let out a nervous laugh as she looked away. “Am I that easy to read?”

“To me, yes. I know everything about you, so I can tell when something’s not right. What’s wrong?”

She started to fiddle with my shirt awkwardly. “Nothing’s *wrong* exactly. Just . . . umm, different.”

“Paulina, you’re starting to scare me.”

“We should talk about it tonight,” she said, finally looking up at me. “We definitely need to talk about it.”

“This isn’t one of those conversations where you’re going to tell me you want to break up, is it?”

She snorted. “Goodness, no. Nothing like that, I promise you.”

Though that was out of the way, I still wasn’t feeling that much better about this. Part of me wondered if there was something with the business that we’d overstretched on, and I questioned whether Paulina saw the need to dial back on something. What else could get her this flustered?

“Tonight,” she said, patting my chest and lightly pecking my lips. “I don’t want to talk about it here, when we could get interrupted at any second, you know?”

“I suppose.”

I didn’t know what else to say besides that. I knew that Paulina could see the anxiety on my face, but it disturbed me that she didn’t just want to tell me what was going on.

Maybe this was really big. Maybe GGMS was in trouble?

Our conversation ended awkwardly too, with Paulina getting another phone call. I waved as I left the room to go back to my office, but I just couldn’t help but think about what could be going on.

And it bothered me for the rest of the day.

Chapter Two

THAT NIGHT, I was still feeling confused, and it didn't go away until I could be alone with Paulina. Of course, that didn't happen until after dinner, when most of the girls were settling into whatever leisurely pursuit that they liked best. For Kennedi and Sadie, that meant gaming. For Bridgette, that meant catching up on her television shows.

"New episode of *Miami Vice* tonight, Kevin!" said Bridgette with excitement. "Wanna watch it with me?"

"I'll pass, but thanks though, Bridge," I said. "I've probably seen the rerun of it half a dozen times anyway."

That was one thing I could never get over. For some reason, music and tv shows in Dragonmont City were all stuck in the 1980s. Movies weren't though, which made for an interesting fusion of current trends. I didn't mind the rules one bit, but I definitely thought it was amusing to see the girls get worked up about watching shows that concluded almost forty years ago.

Besides, I had other plans right now. Paulina had promised me some solo time in the hot tub, and I suspected once we were soaking that she'd be able to tell me what was really bothering her. I went over to the closet in my room and pulled out my favorite pair of trunks, which were dark blue in color. Leaving my "room," which was really only a closet and a desk at this point since I never slept alone, I made my way down the hall but stopped when I heard sounds of excitement.

It was coming from inside Cassidy's room. I knocked on the door only to find the beautifully innocent centaur beaming from ear to ear. Nikki was just behind her and she also looked very pleased.

"Kevin, come in, come in!" shrieked Cassidy, practically dragging me by the arm until I was inside her room. "You have to see this!"

"See what?" I asked. "What has you so excited, Cass?"

"A new review just popped up on the forum for us," explained Nikki, pointing at the screen of Cassidy's laptop. "Look what they had to say

about Cassidy."

I bent down lower until I could read the review word for word.

I can't say enough about the service I've received from GGMS. My condo looks spotless every time one of their maids shows up. My dishes get put away, and my clothes even get folded just the way I like. I usually get Cassidy, and she's just a treat! Thank you, GGMS!

It was signed by Belinda Harley, a name I recognized as being one of the fairies that lived in the Beauman.

"She likes me!" gushed Cassidy. "She really likes me! She called me a treat to work with. Isn't that amazing?"

"She's not wrong at all," I said, chuckling at her excitement. "You do great work, Cass. You've probably grown the most since you started with us."

That wasn't an understatement whatsoever. Cassidy was the one that I wasn't sure was going to work out when we brought her on. It wasn't because of her attitude—Cassidy was always positive and tried her best. It was more about her clumsiness and her habit of breaking things while she was inside one of the apartments. I knew it really affected her self-worth, and there was a point where I had to convince her to stick it out with GGMS.

And I'm certainly glad she did. Cassidy was a treasure, and she worked hard to get better at the job. She quickly became one of the better girls we had, and I was even thinking about talking to Paulina about Cassidy becoming a potential instructor for the newer girls.

"I just can't believe it," continued Cassidy. "I mean, I didn't think I had it in me, you know?"

"No, I don't know," I said. "Because from the moment I met you, you've always had it in you. I think you just needed a little help in getting it out there for the whole world to see. And I couldn't be more proud of you that others are now seeing what I've seen all along."

I didn't intend for that statement to be so sappy, but once it was out there, I saw tears of happiness in her eyes. She hugged me tightly, even kissing me on the lips before she let go.

Unlike the rest of the girls, Cassidy and I hadn't been fully intimate yet. Cassidy was a virgin, but she was a full virgin in that she didn't have *any* experience with the opposite sex, barely even kissing someone else. It had taken us some time to even get to that point, where we could kiss deeply, with tongue.

It didn't bother me in the slightest to go at Cassidy's pace either. Not only because I had the other girls in the house to keep me sated, but because I didn't want to rush anything with her either. Cassidy and I would be intimate when she was ready, and I didn't mind being on her timetable.

"I feel like I need to print this out and have it framed," gushed Cassidy, before glancing over at Nikki. "What do you think, Nikki? Would you do the same?"

Nikki shrugged haphazardly. "I have no idea. Maybe I'll think about it the day I get a review that mentions me."

I had to hold back a laugh when she said that. Poor Nikki wasn't exactly our best girl, but she was okay with that. I suspected it would be some time before she got a review that mentioned her in a positive light. Overall though, I was just happy that she was improving daily and she seemed content to be with GGMS for the long term.

"I've decided that I'm going to frame it!" said Cassidy, nodding her head in exaggeration, which couldn't have been more adorable.

"If you start framing all your positive reviews, you're going to quickly run out of space on your wall," I said.

"Well, that's a good problem to have, don't you think? And if the gods are willing, I'll get even more of them!"

"I'll say a prayer to Malfiore that you continue to get more," promised Nikki, as she headed for the door.

Cassidy's mouth fell open. "Thanks so much, Nikki!"

By the time the dark elf left, Cassidy and I were alone together. The centaur moved closer to me, putting her arms around my neck.

"Do you think we could celebrate all this good news?" she asked, kissing me lightly. "Maybe something we could do that's just the two of us?"

“What did you have in mind?” I asked, keeping my hands firmly on her back.

Cassidy’s head tilted to one side and she shrugged. “I don’t know. Something different though. Something that we haven’t done before? I’m kinda getting burned out on dinner and movie nights.”

I winced. “I thought you liked those kinds of dates?”

“I do, I promise,” she said quickly. “I just want to try something different though. Something special. A unique experience that we’ll never forget.”

“Did you have something special in mind?”

Cassidy shrugged again.

“So you’re not going to make this easy on me, are you?”

“Sorry,” she said with a giggle. “I’ll see what I can find that sounds interesting. More than anything though, I just want to have a really special date with you. We’ve been doing so much lately, and pushing the boundaries past what I’ve ever done before. I figured if we did something really special, maybe we could push that boundary all the way.”

I didn’t know whether I’d really just heard that, and I think my expression showed. Cassidy gave me a knowing look as her eyes locked on me. “Yeah, that’s what I’m talking about.”

“*All* the way?” I asked.

She nodded. “I think it’s time. Don’t you?”

“If you’re ready, then I’m ready,” I said, trying not to sound too eager. “I just didn’t want to pressure you.”

She smiled and kissed me. “You’ve been a perfect gentleman. And you’ve been so patient with me, but now I think it’s time. I want to . . . I want to . . .” Cassidy took a deep breath. “I want to have sex.”

It was like a bomb had gone off in the room. I had to grab something to stay standing, and Cassidy swatted at my exaggerated reaction.

“It hasn’t been *that* long!” she said, laughing at me.

“It’s been a few months!” I teased. “But it’s okay. If you want to go on a special date that will have a happy ending, I’ll do my best to find something that you’ll truly love.”

She sighed happily and pressed against my chest. “This is why we work well together. This is why I love you. And now I want to show you just how much I care about you. Physically.”

I’ll be honest—that last part made me semi-hard. Most of that was because I shared the same feelings that Cassidy had. It was only in the last month that we started talking about love, and I felt the same way about her as I did the rest of the girls.

The other part to all of this was the physics of the entire thing. With Cassidy being a centaur, any sex with her was going to be a memorable experience. I still didn’t know how we were going to make that work, but Cassidy didn’t seem to be the least bit deterred by that part.

By the time I left her room, my thoughts were still centered around putting together a very special night for her. I almost forgot where I was going, but by the time I reached the rooftop terrace, I could see that Paulina was already waiting for me inside the tub.

And seeing that gorgeous goblin girl in a tiny white two-piece suit just about took my breath away.

“Paulina, wow,” I said, making my way over to the tub slowly. She was still standing there, with her hands planted on her hips as she watched me with a demure expression rooted on her lips. Part of me wanted nothing more than to just rip that bikini from her body and have my way with her, but I managed to restrain myself when I remembered that she wanted to have a talk.

Thinking that we’d finally found the privacy we were looking for, I wasted no time in hopping into the tub, wanting to get whatever was on her mind into the open.

It wasn’t going to be that easy though. Especially when another purple-haired goblin girl made her presence known within a matter of seconds.

“Oh, tub time, great idea!” said Kennedi, as she appeared by the stairs to the terrace. She was dressed in a bikini that matched the color of her hair,

and she had a towel draped over her left shoulder. “I really could use a soak!”

I winced when I saw her. Not because I didn’t love every second of Kennedi’s company, but because it sounded like Paulina wanted to speak with me privately. I gave her a glance to see what she was thinking, and I could tell she appeared to be just as unsettled about Kennedi’s arrival as I was.

But before anything else could happen, Paulina touched my arm and nodded. I guessed at that point that having Kennedi’s presence there wouldn’t be a problem.

“I brought something to drink for us too,” said Kennedi, waving a bottle of champagne in the air. Where it came from, I had no idea, but Kennedi soon produced three glasses and set them on the table next to the tub. “Nothing goes together better than alcohol and hot tubs. Except maybe sex. Actually, sex can definitely be added onto that list.”

Paulina giggled. “Is that all you think about, Kennedi? Sex?”

“I mean, it’s definitely in the top three,” said Kennedi, tapping her finger against her chin. “And honestly, you can’t blame me when we have this hunk of a human living with us. He’s like a walking buffet.”

“Love you too, Kennedi,” I said, chuckling.

She splashed down into the tub and sat in my lap, wrapping her arms around me. “Speaking of sex, I have a great idea that all three of us can partake in right now!”

“I’m guessing it’s not playing chess,” joked Paulina.

Kennedi pointed her finger at Paulina. “You’re on the right track!”

“Maybe in a little bit,” said Paulina, eyeing me nervously. “Besides, I heard some news today that I wanted to share with you. Actually, both of you.”

I could tell by her change in body language that this wasn’t *the* news she wanted to share, but I was still interested to hear about what she had learned.

“So it looks like all the delays with getting the business rated are finally over,” said Paulina. “I've finally been able to get us on the schedule.”

“Wait a second,” said Kennedi. “Didn’t you apply for that like three months ago? Right before we moved into the new office space? Why has it taken so long?”

“Delays, unfortunately,” replied Paulina. “Bureaucratic delays, which are usually the worst. In any event, we were on the schedule not long after we moved into the office, but the inspector that we were assigned quit unexpectedly and we were put at the back of the line. And then they had a new business freeze for two months, and now here we are.”

“I’m surprised it didn’t take longer than that,” I said. “I was beginning to think it would never happen.”

“Me too, but it’s very positive news,” said Paulina. “In any event, the inspector will be here the day after tomorrow.”

“They certainly work quickly once they get their delays sorted,” said Kennedi, blowing a raspberry. “That’s not going to cause us any problems, is it?”

Paulina shook her head, making her dark hair dance. “Not at all. We’ll be fine. This new inspector is just going to check out our office space and then go out with a couple maids to see their work. There’s a financial aspect of it that I’ve already submitted, and that’s going over our books to make sure we’re financially stable. Once they’re able to see all of the above, we’ll get our rating.”

Kennedi made a fist bump. “And then we’ll be fucking unstoppable. Well, even more fucking unstoppable than we already are.”

“Agreed, and we can submit for more bids,” I said. “There’s a large chunk of properties out there that will only work with businesses that have a rating. I think we’ve done an amazing job getting as much business as we can without it, but this will be a game-changer. In a way, we’ll be truly legit.”

“And I think it’s necessary now,” said Paulina, lowering her head. “Because maid service companies keep disappearing. I’ve heard another one was bought up this week by EHS.”

EHS was the big fat elephant in the room. It stood for Extravagant Home Services, and maid service was only one facet of all the things they touched. They were the very definition of a faceless mega corporation, and for the last several months, they'd been buying up maid services left and right in order to run the majority of their competition out of the city.

So far, we'd heard of quite a few companies that had been bought up by EHS. In all cases, the buyout was far from amicable, and it often led to mass layoffs while EHS retained only those that they could pay peanuts. As a result, their service sucked, and their online reviews confirmed as much. But it was incredibly hard to beat their pricing.

"Who was it this time?" asked Kennedi.

"You remember our bearded dwarf lady friends, don't you?" asked Paulina.

Kennedi snorted. "I wouldn't call them friends as much as I would call them biatches. Esther and her band of cranky cunts got bought up by EHS?"

Paulina nodded. "Their company has now been fully absorbed. All of their maids were laid off except for Esther. I heard that she accepted a position near the top of the maid service hierarchy, which doesn't surprise me in the slightest."

"Which means she'll be coming after us next," I said ominously, making both girls glance at me. "I wouldn't put it past her. Esther was nasty enough when she just ran a smaller maid service. But put her in charge of EHS' maid service and she's going to look to settle old scores."

"Bring it on!" said Kennedi, pounding her chest. "We beat those hoes fair and square once, and we can do it again." Suddenly, Kennedi winced in pain.

"Ken, are you okay?" asked Paulina.

Kennedi let out an embarrassed smile. "I punched my boob too hard. Give me a second."

I couldn't help it—I laughed a little too hard at that. Paulina did too, and we were soon joined by Kennedi once she was over it.

“See, this is why I don’t worry about much,” said Paulina. “Because no matter what happens, I truly believe this team can overcome anything. Look at how far we’ve come just since Kevin’s joined us.”

“I know I’ve definitely *cum* a lot more with him around,” said Kennedi, touching my thigh underwater.

“Not what I meant at all,” said Paulina, putting her hand against her face.

“Oops,” said Kennedi, withdrawing her hand.

“But still, we’re a formidable team,” continued Paulina. “And I think that no matter what happens, we’ll face everything head on and win.”

“Amen to that,” I said, shooting a smile at Paulina.

“Personally, I think that calls for a toast,” said Kennedi, reaching over the edge of the tub to grab the bottle of champagne. “And wouldn’t you know it, I have a bottle and three glasses right here!”

“There’s never a day when Kennedi’s not prepared to have a little bubbly,” I teased.

Kennedi set about pouring three glasses, but when the time came to give it to Paulina, the gorgeous brunette put up her hand.

“No, that’s okay,” said Paulina. “No alcohol for me please.”

“Say what now?” asked Kennedi. “But this is your favorite kind, made by the hydras on Water Street. I picked this just because I know you like it, Paulina.”

“Thanks but not right now,” said Paulina.

Something wasn’t quite right. I could tell by the look in Paulina’s eye that this went beyond just not wanting a little champagne.

“Paulina, is everything okay?” I asked.

Paulina’s eyes bounced from me to Kennedi and then back to me. Finally, she relented.

“It’s just that I really shouldn’t be drinking alcohol right now.”

“Why’s that?” asked Kennedi, who was still bewildered by Paulina’s refusal. “It’s not like you’re carrying a little bundle of joy inside that belly

of yours.”

My breath caught in my mouth at that moment. It only took one glance at Paulina before I could see the truth in her eyes. She smiled nervously at me, and after a few tense seconds, Kennedi finally caught on.

“No way!” Kennedi shrieked. “You’re preggers? This is so awesome!”

“Just found out earlier today,” said Paulina, her smile growing larger. “I’ve taken a few tests and sure enough, I’m pregnant.”

“That’s so awesome,” continued Kennedi. “So who’s the father?”

That comment made both Paulina and I snort with laughter.

“Oh yeah, Kevin, duh,” said Kennedi, smacking her temple.

“You’re okay with that, right?” asked Paulina, wincing as she shifted to face me. “I’m sorry, I know this wasn’t planned or anything, but it kinda just happened. I was hoping to tell you another way.”

“It explains why you were being so secretive earlier,” I said. “But now everything makes sense. This is wonderful news.”

“Really?” she said, looking surprised. “I wasn’t sure how you’d take it.”

“It’s that surprising to you?” I asked, leaning closer. “I mean, Paulina, we roleplay in bed about knocking you up all the time.”

“Oh, that’s kinky,” said Kennedi, touching my thigh underwater again. “Can we do that too?”

“I know, but it’s one thing to talk about it because it makes us cum and it’s another to actually do it,” said Paulina. “I just didn’t want you to be mad.”

“Not mad at all,” I said, shaking my head firmly. “This is exciting. I can’t tell you how happy it makes me.”

I wasn’t lying to Paulina either. Before I was reborn, the thought of an unexpected pregnancy would have probably made it so that I couldn’t poop for days. I’d be so nauseated that I wouldn’t even know what to do with myself.

But here? This just felt right. Like everything else about Dragonmont City, this felt like it was meant to happen, and I couldn’t have asked for it to

happen with a better woman than Paulina.

I reached over to touch her stomach underwater. It was still so smooth and flat, and I could trace the outline of her faint abs with my finger. “How far along are you?”

“About a quarter,” said Paulina. “So only about two weeks.”

“Wait a second. Two weeks is a quarter?” I asked. “So that means you give birth in two months?!”

“Standard goblin girl pregnancy,” answered Kennedi. “Want to get started on me? Because all this baby talk is really turning me on.”

“I forget that there’s so many things that you don’t know about goblin girls yet,” said Paulina. “But yeah, the baby will be here in less than two months. And I don’t know about you, but there’s so many things to do in that time! And not to mention the business—”

“Don’t worry about the business right now,” I said. “We need to prepare to become parents! I’ve never had a kid before.”

“This is my first too,” said Paulina, reaching for my hand in order to squeeze it. “But everything will be fine. We’ll be great parents, I think. I know you will. I don’t know about me.”

“You definitely will,” I said, kissing her forehead. “I just know it.”

“And I know I’m going to be a wickedly awesome Aunt Kennedi,” said the purple-haired vixen across from us. “Oh, this baby is going to love her auntie so much.”

Paulina raised an eyebrow. “Her? How do you know it’s a girl?”

“Aunts just have really good intuition about this kind of thing,” said Kennedi with a knowing nod.

“We’ll take your word for it,” I joked. “But this is amazing news. I can’t wait. I really can’t.”

“Me neither,” said Paulina. “Especially because it’s with you. It’s like a dream come true.”

By the way Paulina was looking in my eyes, I could tell she had the same thing on her mind as I did. I didn’t take a brain surgeon to figure out what

we were going to do next, and Kennedi caught on right away.

“I think it’s best if I give you two some privacy,” she said, taking her glass as well as Paulina’s glass with her. “At least I have more champagne for me to drink to celebrate!”

“Are you going to take that down to Sadie or something?” I asked her.

Kennedi gave me a strange look. “Nope, I’m going to double-fist these two bad boys. Have fun, you two!”

By the time Kennedi was gone, Paulina had wormed her way into my lap. We started kissing immediately—kisses that were long, drawn out, and full of passion. When Paulina moaned against my lips, I knew I had to get her out of that tiny swimsuit.

“Touch me,” she whimpered, as soon as my hands drifted down to her delightful ass.

Of course I obeyed, feeling all that gorgeous green flesh fill my hands. I even gave it a hearty squeeze, making Paulina giggle.

From there, it was a rush to get naked. I pulled her top all the way down to her stomach, exposing her tits to my eyes. For a brief moment, I wondered whether they would get bigger with the pregnancy, and it seemed that Paulina was able to read my thoughts.

“They’ll probably grow a little in the next month,” she said, cupping each breast. “When they start to fill with milk.”

“Are you trying to turn me on more?” I teased. “Because it’s working.”

Paulina grinned wickedly as she pressed her nipple against my lips. I latched onto it, suckling her breast while I helped to pull her bottoms off her long legs. We had a little more trouble getting my trunks off, but before too long, we were both naked in the tub.

“Put it in,” whispered Paulina. “Please?”

There was no way I could deny my pregnant green goddess anything. I grabbed my cock and positioned the tip between her legs. When I pushed forward, I felt it sliding into Paulina.

She wiggled her hips until my entire shaft filled her body. I don’t think I could have been any happier.

For the next fifteen minutes, we splashed a great amount of water out of the tub. I knew I’d have to spend some time refilling it tomorrow, but right now, I couldn’t care less. All that mattered was celebrating this little slice of heavenly news, and we did that in the best way we knew how.

“Cum in me,” whispered Paulina, as sweat caked our brows. “Cum in your pregnant goblin girl.”

She kept chanting that phrase over and over again. Finally, I could take it no longer. I filled Paulina with every drop as she kissed me lovingly.

It was a perfect ending to an amazing day. And I knew that in two short months, life was about to get all the more meaningful.

Chapter Three

I THINK everyone was on pins and needles when the rating inspector showed up two days later.

I know I was, and that was even with everything in good order and all the employees on their best behavior. That second part wasn't too hard, mostly because everyone knew just what was at stake, but it was still nerve-wracking from the moment the inspector showed up.

She turned out to be a fairy, which wasn't that surprising. Most of the upper bureaucracy of the city was made up of fairies, with only a sprinkling of the other magical races to round out their numbers. For the most part, I didn't mind the fairies one bit, and this lady seemed very pleasant as Paulina showed her around the business.

We didn't know what kind of marks we scored during the office inspection, but I was careful to watch the fairy's body language to see if she was surprised by anything. The problem with that was that she had a great poker face, and I couldn't tell whether she loved or hated us by the time it was over.

"I've seen everything that I need to see for your office," announced the fairy by about lunchtime. "But now, I need to move into the final portion of the inspection, which is appraising the work that your maids do. I'm told you'll be sending me to observe two of your maids in action?"

Paulina nodded. "Yes, I've already made the arrangements. You'll be with one of my girls for the first hour, and then the second for an hour after that. They'll be in the same building, and I've asked them to coordinate the hand-off with each other. Ah, here they come now."

My poker face vanished when I saw who it was that Paulina had in mind. None other than Cassidy and Nikki appeared, both dressed in their full outfits, and both looking like they were ready to take on the world.

"I can't wait to show you how we work, Inspector," said Cassidy, performing a bow in front of the fairy.

“Very well, I’m yours to command now, ladies,” said the fairy. “I’ll just follow along behind you.”

The girls marched toward the front door, where Cassidy gave me a little wave before they were gone. As soon as the door was shut, I doubled on Paulina quickly.

“Babe, I’m not trying to doubt your judgment or anything, but Cassidy and Nikki?” I asked, raising my eyebrow. “Is that really the best combination for something as important as this?”

If Paulina was feeling any anxiety, she didn’t show it. “I think they’ll do great, don’t you?”

I opened my mouth to say something, but I shut it just as quickly. I knew Cassidy would do well and Nikki wasn’t that bad either, but in my heart of hearts, I don’t know if I would have risked something as important as this on them.

And as soon as I had that thought, I felt a little guilty.

“I know what you’re thinking,” said Paulina, touching my arm. “They weren’t my first choice either. I was going to send her with Sadie and Bridgette, but as I was thinking about it this morning, I decided to switch things up and put the inspector with Cassidy and Nikki. Do you know why?”

The first answer I thought of was also the easiest one. “Because you like to live dangerously?”

Paulina smiled. “Maybe. But it also comes down to this—yes, on paper Cassidy and Nikki are probably our weakest maids. Cassidy has shown a ton of improvement in the last month, but she’s not Bridgette. And Nikki, well, she still makes me nervous, but this company needs the talents of *all* its members, not just the best ones. And I think it’s important that this rating we’re about to earn is a fair appraisal of Goblin Girl Maid Service as it currently exists, not just the best aspects of it.”

“That’s a lot to gamble right now,” I said.

Paulina touched her chest. “I know, but I feel in my heart it’s the right decision. We’re only as strong as our weakest link. If we fail, that’s not

just on Cassidy or Nikki, but on the entire company for not giving them the guidance that they need to succeed. I'm willing to gamble on that, Kevin. There are quickly becoming only two options in the city for maid service—us or EHS. I want there to be a clear distinction between us and them. We invest in our people, we train them, we trust them. We treat them like people, and I think it's important that this idea is reflected today."

I didn't respond immediately when Paulina stopped talking. She turned to face me as a nervous look appeared on her face. "Do you think I'm being stupid?"

I took her in my arms. "I think you're being a good leader, Paulina. And I think the reason why this company has done as well as it has in the past few months is because of you."

Paulina snorted. "I'd be nothing without my CHO. He's the real talent around here."

"We're a good team," I said. "Which is why I know we'll be good parents."

She smiled. "Speaking of that, I might need to sit down for a bit. I've been on my feet all morning, and I don't know if it's the pregnancy or what, but I'm tired already—ach!"

I didn't wait for her to finish before reaching down and pulling Paulina into my arms. I cradled her against my chest like she was a new bride and marched her into her office while Paulina giggled.

"Babe, what are you doing?" she said, playfully pounding on my shoulder.

"Getting you to sit down," I said, depositing her in her chair. "Because I know you'd never do it on your own so I figured I'd give you some help."

"You're right, because I don't have much time," she said. "The new girls arrive for day two of boot camp, and I don't want to be late."

"Why don't you let me take over for that?" I said. "I've seen you run the boot camp before, and I know I can take that off your plate."

Paulina shook her head. "No, I can't do that. Not that I don't trust you, but I'd hate to give that up."

“Paulina, you’re going to have to give some things up eventually,” I told her. “If you’re already getting tired now, what happens six weeks from now when you’re fully pregnant?”

“I’ll just have to take more naps throughout the day,” she said defensively.

“*Or* you can learn to delegate,” I said. “Let me do it.”

Paulina wasn’t ready to give that up yet. She pushed herself out of her chair and kissed me on the cheek.

“I love that you worry about me,” she said quietly. “But I’m not a big bowling ball just yet. And I can still take care of it.”

“You promise? You’re not biting off more than you can chew?”

“Pinky promise,” she said, holding out her green finger.

“Okay,” I said reluctantly, “But tell me if you get to that point. It’s okay to take a step back. No one would blame you, trust me.”

“I’d probably blame me,” said Paulina, stepping away from me. She walked back over to her desk, where she pulled out an army helmet and stuck it on her head. “But anyway, come meet the new girls. Let’s see how they do on their second day.”

I hadn’t had a chance yet to meet the new girls. Though they started yesterday, I was too busy to observe their first day of boot camp. Paulina seemed to think they had promise though, and as I followed her to the dedicated training space on the other side of the floor, I saw four pairs of eyes watching us nervously.

“Ladies, I’m glad to see everyone came back for day two,” said Paulina, before she pointed at me. “I’d also like to introduce you to our CHO, Kevin.”

“What does CHO stand for?” asked the only girl that wasn’t a goblin in the room. Judging by her snout and her wings, I judged her to be a dragonkin.

“Chief Handsome Officer,” said Paulina with a small grin. “Why he has the title should be easy to see now.”

I didn’t think the dragonkin girl got the joke, but glancing at the three goblin girls in the room, I could tell that they certainly did.

“So yesterday was all about orientation and getting you situated in the company,” continued Paulina, using her baton to smack her other hand. “Today, we’re going to begin real training. And that involves the proper way to conduct maid service on an apartment. You’ve probably noticed that we’re sitting in a bedroom right now.”

That was one of the best things about our training area. We had three separate rooms created inside it—a bedroom, a kitchen, and a bathroom—so that we could train our newbies on correct techniques. So far, this would be the first class of maids that got to see the full setup, and I couldn’t wait to see how it paid off.

“Okay, we’re going to pair off in groups, and then I’m going to assign each pair to one of the rooms,” said Paulina. “You’ll have forty-five minutes to clean the room before we rotate. I’ll be making my rounds to give any pointers or advice that you need, but I want to see what you can do on your own so I can appraise how much help you’ll need. Let’s get started, shall we?”

For the next couple hours, Paulina and I watched each pair go about their assignments. For my part, I was mostly happy with the results by the time it was over. All four of the girls seemed like they could do the job, and they all seemed willing to learn.

The only potential issues I saw were with their personalities, but that was a minor quibble. When we brought on Bridgette, Nikki, and Cassidy, each of the girls were distinct in their own separate way, and they integrated into the group seamlessly.

I wasn’t so sure about this group. Mostly because it seemed like they just weren’t as memorable.

The dragonkin girl, Xena, was probably the worst. I didn’t know if it had anything to do with her being a dragon, but there just wasn’t much personality there. She did her job and did it well for the most part, but any effort I made to ask her about herself was just met with short answers.

“Is this the first time you’ve been a maid? What do you think about it so far?”

“It’s fine.”

“Okay, do you have any friends that are looking for jobs too? We’ll probably have to hire again in a few weeks.”

“No.”

“Erm, well, do you have any preferred times when you can’t work? We’re very flexible when it comes to what hours you want to work.”

“No, I’m good.”

Talking with Xena was like pulling teeth. By the time I was done, I’d rather have a root canal than talk with her any further. I didn’t know if it was a reflection of the fact that the goblin girl we paired her with, Thora, didn’t shut up once during the entire time.

“I sure do love making beds,” said Thora, chattering incessantly while they worked. “Beds, beds, beds. They really are fun. The bigger the better, I suppose, though I once had a really small bed that just felt all kinds of cozy. But then our pet gnome peed all over my mattress and we had to throw it away. It was terrible, but oh well, what can you do? I sure do love my pet gnome though. Have you ever had a pet gnome? Oh, they’re lovely and amazing and I just want to hold it and squeeze it forever and ever and ever and ever . . .”

Part of me saw why Xena was being so quiet at that point. Thora talked enough for both of them. I found that I was getting a headache after listening to the pleasant but airheaded Thora so I switched with Paulina so I could see the other girls.

Paulina looked all too ready to switch, which I found to be troubling as I went into the kitchen area. Here I found two more goblin girls, twins by the looks of them, and they were both leaning against the counter when I stepped in. It was only once they saw me that they pretended to get back to work, though their effort was minimal at best.

“Have you two ever been maids before?” I asked as I tried to get to know them.

“Once,” replied the one girl, in a voice that was almost too masculine to be female. “We used to work for Yvette’s Maids ‘n More.”

“Oh, I remember them,” I said. “I believe they were bought out by EHS a few months back though.”

“We don’t recall,” said the other girl. “We were let go by Yvette about six months ago.”

“Why were you let go if you don’t mind me asking?”

Both girls looked at each other. “Personal differences,” they answered at the same time.

That answer sounded a little too ominous to me. After hearing that, I watched them a little more closely as they went about their training, trying to see just what made them such a liability that they were let go.

On the face of it, Sheri and Teri knew how to clean, but I found that they were slower than most girls, *much* slower. And whenever I turned my back, I saw that they liked to stop working until I was focused on them again.

All in all, it wasn’t the best first impression, for any of the four girls. I knew we’d have our work cut out for us in making sure they became fully trained.

Still, that’s what we were here for, and I knew that our methods worked. Cassidy and Nikki were proof of that, and I really hoped they were doing well for the inspector.

By the time the day was coming to a close, we let the new girls go home while Paulina and I went back to her office. Paulina sat down in her chair with a groan and put one of her feet in her lap, rubbing the bottom of her foot with her fingers.

“That felt like such a long day for some reason,” said Paulina, closing her eyes as she massaged her feet. “I’m ready to put my feet up and maybe take a relaxing soak in the hot tub.”

“Maybe my very pregnant goblin girl needs to take a step back from her duties,” I suggested lightly.

Paulina gave me a look that said I-thought-we-talked-about-this-already. I didn’t plan to push the subject, nor did I have the opportunity to when Cassidy and Nikki appeared outside her door.

Suddenly, Paulina pushed to her feet. “Well, how did it go? Everything go okay?”

I was a little dismayed when both Cassidy and Nikki shrugged.

“We’re not entirely sure,” admitted Cassidy. “She didn’t say anything.”

“*Nothing* at all?” asked Paulina.

“I mean, she asked me a few times why I was doing something in particular,” said Nikki. “But I think she was just just trying to wrap her head around it. It wasn’t a bad thing, at least I don’t think it was.”

“She was nerve-wracking,” said Cassidy. “She just stayed behind me the whole time, which was awkward when I was using the vacuum. I would have felt better if she did more than just write things down on her clipboard.”

“I’m not surprised by this,” I said. “This morning, she didn’t have much to say either. They probably do it that way on purpose. So as not to give it away if something is dreadfully wrong.”

“I just wish I had some kind of indication how she was leaning,” said Paulina, leaning back into her chair. “I don’t regret a thing about what we did, but I’d just like to know if it was enough.”

“What are the possible ratings we could earn again?” asked Nikki.

“The lowest rating is an F,” I said. “But there’s also A, B, and C. No D though.”

“And there’s three flavors of A,” added Paulina. “A, A+, and A++. Though anything higher than a C is passing.”

“Oh,” said Nikki, brightening. “Well that can’t be too bad. We just have to get a C and we can pass?”

“It’s not that easy, unfortunately,” said Paulina. “While B and C are technically passing, most customers will look at a C rating as one step above failure. I think that would hurt our business just as much as a failing grade to be honest. B isn’t that much better. We really need at least an A to make this work.”

“We’ll be fine,” I said, moving behind Paulina to rub her shoulders. “How long do we have to wait before we get the rating?”

“No more than a week,” said Paulina.

“A week for what?”

We all turned to see Bridgette, Sadie, and Kennedi standing at the door. All three were still in their outfits, and it was obvious that they weren’t far behind Cassidy and Nikki.

We took a moment to explain what happened to all three of them. Once we did, Sadie was the one that had a brilliant idea.

“I wonder if it’s only a week because of the upcoming holiday?” she asked. “You think they’ll get us the results after Christmas?”

As soon as she said the word, I went looking for a calendar. How could I have forgotten it was almost Christmas? Sure enough, the date was December 20th, and the holiday was almost here.

“That’s probably it,” said Paulina. “I bet that’s why it will take so long.”

“Everything will be shutting down soon inside the city,” said Sadie. “I have an idea. Why don’t we go somewhere? Somewhere nice to spend the holiday? Get away for a bit?”

“What did you have in mind, Sadie?” asked Paulina. “The way I see it, we have two more days of work and then we’ll have four days off because of Christmas. Where did you want to go?”

Sadie’s eyes glazed over. “Somewhere magical and awesome! Someplace where we can have a ton of fun and really celebrate the true meaning of Christmas.”

“You mean endless presents and sweets?” asked Kennedi.

“No, being with your family!” said Sadie, laughing as she put her arms around Kennedi and Cassidy simultaneously. “And we’re a family, aren’t we? And soon enough, our family is going to get one person bigger, so we might as well enjoy the time we have right now.”

“Speaking of magic, does it ever snow in Dragonmont City?” I asked. “I can only think of the place I used to live before I came here, and there

would already be snow on the ground right now. It’s not even cold outside.”

“No, and it will only be cold one day out of the year,” said Bridgette. “And that’s Christmas day.”

“Bridgette’s right,” said Cassidy. “We’ll get snow overnight so that it’s a white Christmas. And it’ll be cold enough for the entire day to really fit the mood of Christmas, but by the next day, we’ll be back to sunny and warm temperatures. We truly have the best of everything here.”

“Wait, I have it!” said Kennedi, sticking her finger in the air. “I know exactly where we can go to get away from the city and enjoy some downtime on our own. And we can do so with family while we’re at it.”

“Which family would that be?” asked Nikki nervously.

Kennedi grinned. “Aunt Greta and Uncle Andy!”

Chapter Four

The next two days passed rapidly until we were on the brink of the long holiday weekend. By closing time on the second day, just about all of Dragonmont City had shut down, and there was a huge exodus as many people left the city to spend the holiday with their families.

For me, it was going to be my first Christmas in this world, and I was looking forward to what Kennedi had in mind. I noticed though that Paulina was more nervous about what was to come, and when I asked her about it, she started to laugh.

“Sometimes I forget you’ve only been here such a short time,” she said. “But you’ve never met Kennedi’s aunt and uncle. Just to warn you—they’re total hippies.”

“Hippies as in they wear flower clothing and hate war?” I asked.

“Hmm, the hippies in this world are a little softer than that,” she said. “There’s no war here, so there’s nothing like that to protest. These hippies just like to do a lot of drugs and experience free love.”

“Should we be watchful of Nikki while we’re there?” I asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Probably not a bad idea. But they’re harmless, I promise. I think they’re just going to give us a lot to laugh about.”

I didn’t know what to make about Paulina’s prediction other than to see for myself. Kennedi let us know that her aunt and uncle lived about thirty minutes north of Dragonmont City, in a small beach community that was mostly made up of goblins. The irony of going to the beach to celebrate Christmas didn’t escape me, but Kennedi promised me that we’d still get snow on the day of the holiday regardless.

“Just make sure you pack all your beach stuff!” said Kennedi. “We’ll go swimming the day before Christmas, but on the holiday itself, we’ll go sledding down the beach dunes!”

“This is really going to be interesting,” I said, shaking my head as I packed.

It didn’t take us very long to pack. All of us came out with one trunk’s worth of clothing, and we had them stacked at the curb while we waited for the dragon that was going to take us to our destination.

As we were waiting, I noticed we were one girl short. Cassidy still wasn’t anywhere to be seen, and I had the girls wait while I went back inside the house to find her.

I found the centaur in the room that she was staying in. I hesitated to call it a bedroom, mostly because it didn’t feel like one to me. Cassidy didn’t have anything resembling a real bed. Instead, she slept on the floor like most centaurs do, on a pile of blankets and pillows that she swore was comfortable.

I knew she had a bed when she stayed with her parents, but there wasn’t much of a relationship there after she moved in with us (not that there was much to begin with anyway).

“All set, Cass?” I asked, gesturing to her trunk. “The dragon ought to be here any moment.”

Cassidy tried to lift her trunk but she could only get it to budge a little before she admitted defeat. “Do you think you could help me with this? I’m so sorry, Kevin, but I’m having the hardest time trying to move this trunk. I think I packed too much.”

“Sure, no problem.”

Cassidy’s trunk was a little heavier than mine but it wasn’t too bad. I pulled it up so that it could rest against my shoulder—something that made her eyes bulge when she saw it.

“Kevin, don’t hurt yourself!” she said, rushing to my side with extended hands.

“Believe me, it’s not that heavy,” I said. “I got it, I got it.”

“So strong,” said Cassidy, giving me a flirty look for a moment until she realized she forgot something. “Hang on, I need to grab my shampoo!”

She ran out of the room quickly, and I decided while I waited that there was no sense in letting this trunk continue to rest on my shoulder. I put it

back on the floor to wait for her return, my eyes naturally drifting back to her “bed” once again.

At that moment, I kinda felt embarrassed. Cassidy had been living with us since shortly after she started with GGMS, and it was only now that I really realized that her sleeping area left a lot to be desired. Right then and there, I decided I was going to make sure she got a proper bed. I didn’t know how yet, since I knew most centaur beds were custom-made, but one way or another, I was going to get this issue solved.

“Okay, I’m ready to go now,” announced Cassidy, clutching a small bottle in her hand which she slipped into her trunk in short order. “Let’s go to the beach!”

By the time we were both outside, the dragon had arrived and the group was in the process of loading our luggage. There was a small, flat platform that was right at the base of the dragon’s tail, and it was here that I helped to make sure each trunk was fully secured and tied down before we could climb aboard the dragon. We also had to put Cassidy here, since she couldn’t ride on the dragon’s back like the rest of us. After making sure she was strapped in, I was the last one to climb up its wing and take my position sitting on its spine.

“All of your luggage safely tethered to my back, sir?” asked the very polite dragon once we were all sitting on his back.

“I think we’re ready,” I told him.

“Very good. And where might I be taking you fine people today? I’m told you want to leave Dragonmont City for a destination north, yes?”

“That’s right,” said Kennedi. “Please take us to Green Goblin Beach!”

“A fantastic destination,” said the dragon, letting his approval be known as he flickered his tail. “Hold on tight. And a one, and a two, and a three!”

Suddenly, he jumped into the air, taking off while his large wings started to flap. We gained altitude quickly until we were nearly as tall as the stunning buildings downtown. The dragon stayed clear of the city, flying on a northerly route until the glass buildings faded from my view. As soon as the dragon hit the coast, he followed it all the way north, until I could see a large expanse of sand just below us.

The town of Green Goblin Beach was a cozy one, situated on a bluff next to the ocean. The bluff itself was only about twenty feet higher than the lower-lying sand, and it separated the town proper from the beach area.

From that moment on, the dragon started to descend, losing altitude until he could plant his feet firmly on the bluff overlooking the beach.

“Oh my goodness, I haven’t been back here in years,” gushed Kennedi, as she gazed at the small beach town just in front of us. “It’s just like I remembered it, down to the littlest detail!”

“It’s not bad,” said Nikki, nodding her approval as she climbed off the dragon. “And Malfiore loves sand. Maybe I can bring some to him in a dream seance or something. That would surely earn me his good fortune for the next fortnight.”

“I’m sure he’d be pleased by that,” replied Paulina, giving me a knowing grin seconds later.

We hopped off the dragon and collected our luggage. At first I thought we might have to walk a long way to get where we were going, but Kennedi pointed to a house that was only about a block away.

“Right there!” she said. “That’s Uncle Andy’s place. Come on, everyone! Let’s go!”

As we neared the house, I could tell it was just a little bit . . . different than the ones around it. For one, the actual house was more of a lesson in practicality than anything else. By that I meant that things weren’t put together because they looked nice but rather more for function.

I could tell that the siding on one side of the house had been recently redone, but instead of painting it so that it matched the other three sides, it was left in its natural color. I could also tell that the grass was much longer than the surrounding neighbor’s, but that was where things differed in comparison to the house. The yard was actually decorated with bird baths, ornaments, flower beds, as well as a circle surrounding a massive firepit.

It wasn’t hard to confirm that Kennedi’s aunt and uncle were hippies, and that became immediately obvious as soon as they opened the door to greet us.

“Hey there all you groovy goblins!” said a woman that could only be Aunt Greta. She looked just how I imagined her to look, wearing a tie-dyed colorful shirt alongside a flowing, full-length skirt. She was wearing wooden shoes and had a rainbow scarf tied around her neck. For some reason, I had the strangest feeling of deja vu, but I just couldn’t place it.

“Aunt Greta!” shrieked Kennedi, coming in tight for a hug.

“Is that Kennedi Moonbeam that I hear?” came a man’s voice from inside the house.

I heard Kennedi yell for her Uncle Andy as I elbowed Paulina in the side. “Kennedi Moonbeam?” I repeated.

“From what I understand, Kennedi’s aunt and uncle were around a lot in her early years,” said Paulina, trying to restrain a laugh. “I think they even got to pick her middle name.”

“Oh, that is too good,” said Sadie, covering her mouth while she laughed. “I can’t wait to use it the next time we play *Grand Theft Auto*.”

“You must be Kennedi’s friends!” said Aunt Greta, now that we had her full attention. “We’re so pleased to have you here! Any friends of Kennedi’s are friends of ours too. Welcome to the house of peace and love!”

“Malfiore doesn’t like peace and love though,” grumbled Nikki as we stepped inside. “Only pain, suffering, and darkness.”

“What was that, dear?” asked Aunt Greta.

“Er, nothing. Hi, I’m Nikki.”

We continued to greet Aunt Greta until it was only me and Paulina left. At that point, Aunt Greta let out an excitable yell when she saw Paulina.

“It’s been so long since I’ve seen you, child!” she said, shaking Paulina heatedly. “How are you? Are you well? How are your dreams lately?”

“Pretty good,” said Paulina, putting on a polite smile.

“I miss seeing you so much,” said Aunt Greta. “You and Kennedi used to be as thick as thieves when you were younger, but I swear half the time I talk to her anymore, she only talks about the business.”

“Yeah, everyone has been busy with GGMS lately,” said Paulina, waving her hand. “Everything is going so well, but it does take up a lot of our time.”

Aunt Greta nodded, but she didn’t say anything else about it. Instead, I felt the weight of her stare on me, and before I knew it, she was welcoming me with open arms.

“And you must be Kevin!” she said, wrapping her arms around me. “Kennedi just gushes about you. The way she talks about you, you put all the stars in the night sky.”

“I’m not sure about that,” I said, chuckling awkwardly. “But I definitely love Kennedi. She’s one incredible woman.”

“And I hear you’ve made all these lovely girls part of your harem,” said Aunt Greta. “Is that true too?”

I still had a hard time answering that question. Not because I was embarrassed about the harem, but more because I didn’t know who would be accepting of it and who wouldn’t be.

“That’s right,” I said, nodding my head tentatively. “We’re all together in the same harem.”

Aunt Greta put her hands together and clapped. “Ah, the stars bless my heart. There’s nothing I love seeing more than a wholesome harem full of love. You know, at one time Andy and I were also in the same harem? And I had two other sister-wives with me!”

From that moment onward, I listened as Greta recounted her tale of harem bliss from her youth. Though I found out that the other sister-wives eventually drifted away, she still had the fondest memories of the time she was part of harem.

“And anyway, that’s why you’ll notice this house is only about love,” she said, finishing the story. “As much love as you can stomach, and enough wisdom to last you throughout the ages!”

“Er, that’s great to hear,” I said, not knowing how to truly respond to that.

Greta hugged me tightly again and beckoned me inside the house. The house looked similar to the outside, in that it was a mix of colors and

outdated furniture. Some of the things there had seen better days, especially the faded wallpaper which was peeling at the corners of many of the walls. Other things looked like they were barely held together, and I noticed a surprising amount of duct tape on things that I never would have expected. The house was still comfortable, but it made me grateful for Paulina's duplex more than anything else.

It was inside that I met Uncle Andy, a man that was dressed in similar colors as his wife. He was also wearing a headband with the universal sign for peace emblazoned on the fabric. As soon as he saw me, he put his hands together and bowed.

"Welcome to the land of peace and love, Kevin," he said, his voice much deeper than I expected. "And kudos to you on the size of your harem. Personally, I could only handle three women at any one time, but to see you at six? You truly have the blessing of the stars!"

"I was just telling him that, dear!" said Greta as she put her arm around me. "You're going to love it here, Kevin."

"It appears like it," I said, making both Nikki and Cassidy laugh next to me.

"Anyway, how was the journey?" asked Andy. "Did you have any trouble on the way north?"

"Not in the slightest, Uncle Andy," replied Kennedi. "And we are so ready for a little holiday vacation!"

"There's no better way to start that vacation off than with a little bit of tea," said Greta, running into the kitchen before reappearing with a steaming kettle and several mugs. "This is made with the earthen roots of the friendship tree! It's perfect for calming your chakra after a long trip."

I noticed the tea smelled really great, and I could definitely use a mug of something to quench my thirst, but it was poor Nikki that looked like she was about to have a fit as she stared into her tea.

"You don't like tea, dear?" asked Uncle Andy once he noticed Nikki.

The dark elf gulped hard as she turned pale. "It's just that I think drinking this might conflict with my . . . religious beliefs."

I pursed my lips as I watched Andy process that. I didn't know if that was going to be an issue, but the older hippie just slipped into the kitchen and brought out a plain glass moments later. "How about just water then? Nothing conflicting about water, right?"

Nikki brightened considerably. "Thank you, Uncle Andy!"

From that moment on, I felt like we were truly in the grasp of Kennedi's aunt and uncle, who despite their strange ways and speech, were very kind and welcoming people.

"Come on, everyone!" announced Greta about an hour after we'd arrived (and after two full mugs of tea). "It's time for dinner!"

We came into a small dining room with one of those tables that expanded when you needed the extra space. Andy put the extender board into the middle, which easily made another four slots at the table at the expense of forcing the end chairs to sit tight against the walls. It was workable, barely, but it would do for now.

"I hope everyone is starving!" said Aunt Greta as she pulled out something that looked like a large roast that I couldn't immediately identify. "Does everyone like buckleberry water buffalo? Andy and I live off of this meat, mostly because they do so much damage to the local ecosystem that it's considered a blessing to thin their numbers."

"But we live in a fantasy world?" I questioned. "I thought all the creatures around here get along in harmony?"

Paulina let out a thin smile. "They do," she whispered. "But don't tell them that."

I resisted the urge to laugh as I resumed my attention to Greta.

"The buckleberry water buffaloes live off the sand dunes and when they make their nests, they disturb the homes of many other creatures," said Greta, nodding her head at me while she spoke. "It's good karma to eat them in order to restore harmony to the other magical creatures of the beach."

"And they're darn tasty," added Andy, elbowing my side as he grabbed his fork. "Let's eat, Greta, I'm famished!"

Greta set the roast on the table before giving Nikki a nervous glance. “Erm, can you eat meat with your religious beliefs, dear? I have a lovely green bean casserole in the kitchen if not?”

Nikki looked at the water buffalo roast and nodded. “Yeah, it’s cool. I eat meat just fine.”

“Does she ever,” muttered Kennedi, making the rest of us snicker.

“Oh, wonderful!” said Greta, not hearing Kennedi. She put the rest of the dishes on the table, and we dove in moments later.

From that moment onward, I felt like part of the family. I was still partly amazed at just how quickly I was accepted by Kennedi’s aunt and uncle, but it seemed like acceptance was one of the things they prided themselves on. Especially her uncle, who had no shortage of questions about how our living situation worked out.

“So everyone here has a room at your house?” asked Andy, after a bit of small talk at the table. “And where do you sleep?”

“Well, I have my own room, but I never sleep there,” I answered honestly. “Most of the time I’m switching around. From Paulina to Kennedi to Bridgette to Sadie . . .”

He smiled fondly. “Yes, that brings back lots of memories for me from my youth. Back then, it was so much more of a radical time. I wish you could have seen the Dragonmont City that I grew up in. Before all the skyscrapers went up, it was cozy and full of people that seemed to understand that the universe has a symbiotic relationship with itself. As long as you do good within it, good will be returned to you. Do you feel me, Kevin?”

“It still feels that way to me,” I said, feeling the need to defend my home. “Sure, there’s some aspects of it that aren’t quite right, but it really beats where I came from. In my first life, there was almost too much suffering and pain.”

“Tell me about that, Kevin. I’m always fascinated to hear the stories of rebornies. What was your first life like?”

“In a couple words—not great,” I said, letting out an awkward laugh. “I never had enough money, and it was always hard to come by. I had to work long hours just to be able to afford a small, drafty apartment. I didn’t have much family, and most of the time, I felt like I was truly stuck. Like I couldn’t make my life any better.”

I had to give it to him—Andy was a good audience. He looked enthralled as I talked about my life on Earth, especially whenever we got to the last day of my first life.

“And it just fell on you?” he said, using his hands to mime the action with the help of a salt shaker. “And you went splat?”

“I didn’t feel a thing, so I’m not really sure,” I said. “I’m told that’s what happened to me, but it all happened within a split second. But the next thing I know, I’m awake again and being told that I was just reborn into Dragonmont City, and I’ll be honest with you, it was the best day of my life. Because it was the day I met Paulina and Kennedi.”

Kennedi, who was sitting not far from me, reached under the table to squeeze my leg. When I turned my head to glance at her, she whispered that she loved me in full view of her uncle.

“You really have something speh-shul here, Kevin,” he said, slurring his speech after taking another drink of his herbal tea (which might have been his fourth or fifth cup. How much did he drink?). “It’s obvious that your women are enamored, in love, with you. I’ve always heard human men form the best harems, the very best! Of course, it’s a lot harder for goblin men to grow ours, let alone keep them happy. I gave it my best try though.”

I was starting to wonder if I needed to cut him off from having any more tea. Andy wasn’t feeling any pain at the moment, but I liked that he was starting to open up to me.

Talking with him also made me remember something the girls told me shortly after I arrived. One of the reasons goblin women and human men were such a great pairing was that goblin men usually weren’t the best partners. They could be very hostile, and most of them didn’t have the necessary equipment between the legs to satisfy the needs of the harem

(not to mention the stamina). Now, I wasn't about to go asking about that, but I suspected that Uncle Andy made do with what he had.

After dinner, we were treated to dessert, which in reality was just mint ice cream placed on top of a waffle. I was told that the ice cream was "ecologically sustainable" but I didn't have the heart to ask what that meant exactly. And it wasn't bad either, I thought as I cleaned my plate.

Once dinner was over, Aunt Greta brought out her collection of candles, which involved lighting about twenty of them just so we could enjoy the smell. It was just a little awkward to keep having candle after candle forced under your nose, but thankfully Uncle Andy seemed to see that it was getting to be a little much for us.

"Come on, Greta, enough with the cantles," slurred Andy, blowing out the two closest to him. "They're a bunch of adults, and they're too polite to tell you that you're boring them to tears with your cantles."

Greta didn't look too upset to hear that, but she nodded reluctantly as she started to blow them out. I think it was Kennedi that was most relieved because she thanked her Uncle Andy after Greta brought her candles back to a spare room.

"Thank you so much, Uncle Andy," she said. "The smell of all those combined scents was giving me a headache."

"I don't know why she in-sips on treating you all like children," he said, shaking his head before letting out a hiccup. "I'm guessing you all want some real entertainment, don't you?"

We looked amongst each other and shrugged. "Sure, what did you have in mind? Like a movie?" I asked.

"Even better!" said Andy, grinning as he retrieved a big box out of a cabinet. "How do you all feel about a magic show?"

We'd leapt out of the frying pan and into the fire. For the next half hour, we watched as an increasingly-drunken Andy showed us every magical trick in his arsenal. All the while, he put on a black cape over his hippie colors, making him look like quite the spectacle.

“And for this next one, I’m going to need a volunteer!” he said, looking out at all of us. No one was keen to raise their hand, but unfortunately it was poor Cassidy that got selected to go up front.

“You’re not going to saw me in half, are you?” she asked hesitantly as she stepped up next to him.

“Good spirits, no,” he said, shaking his head. “I’m talented but not *that* talented. No, I want you to pick a number between one and one hundred. Don’t tell me what it is!”

By the time the magic show was over, we were wiped. I could barely stop yawning every two minutes, and I could tell the rest of the girls were in a similar condition. That was when Andy put away his kit, and they showed us to where we’d be sleeping that night.

“We’re going to put you in the free love room!” announced Greta, leading us down the hall until she opened a single door on the right side. Poking my head in, I saw what was an average-sized room except for one glaring exception.

The entire room was made up of a bed that spanned from wall to wall, with nothing in between. There was a large headboard and more pillows than I could possibly count, as well as stacks of blankets on either corner. The sheets underneath were a dark-red color, and there were hearts, stars, and moons hanging from the walls.

It didn’t take long to figure out why this was called the free love room.

“Um, I really don’t want to be the one to go there, but did your aunt and uncle have lots of orgies in this room or something?” Sadie asked Kennedi once we were alone.

“Judging by the dust on the top of the blankets, I’m guessing no one has had an orgy in here for many decades,” said Paulina. She blew off the dust, but when that didn’t solve the problem to her satisfaction, she just tossed the dusty blanket to the side and took from the ones under it.

“As is blatantly obvious by now, my aunt and uncle are hippies,” said Kennedi. “Let’s not think of the orgies in here from decades past and instead, let’s just get some sleep. I’m exhausted.”

“I’m worn out from all the magic and the tea and the water buffaloes,” said Bridgette with a coy grin. Kennedi threw a pillow at her as a consequence.

“I think they’re very nice people,” said Cassidy. “A little bit eccentric, but wonderful all the same. Especially for giving us a place to stay!”

“Malfiore is going to be so upset with me for staying in this house,” said Nikki, shaking her head. “Especially in this free love room. I’m going to have to do extra penance just to make up for this.”

I put my arm around her shoulders. “Somehow, I think Malfiore will understand. You don’t need to be so hard on yourself.”

“Mostly since Malfiore is just a figment of your imagination,” said Sadie.

Nikki’s eyes glared with murder. She pointed her finger at Sadie. “Take it back!”

“Okay, okay, sorry,” said Sadie. “It’s just that if he really cared that much, he’d make his displeasure known.”

“He likes to give long punishments for his victims,” said Nikki. “Toying with them before swooping in for the kill. This might be his way of toying with me before he snuffs my life out.”

“You’ll be fine,” I told her, right before grabbing a blanket. “Come on, everyone, let’s get some sleep.”

“Does anyone else want some more herbal tea before we go to sleep?” asked Sadie innocently.

She was met with a barrage of pillows.

Chapter Five

The next day, we decided early on that we were going to hit the beach. I think we were all ready to get out on our own, and the sight of the sparkling water in the distance made us eager to frolic in the surf.

It was also a way for us to get away from Kennedi's relatives. Not that any of us minded them, but drinking Aunt Greta's morning herbal tea left a distinct smell in the house, and it wasn't from the herbs themselves.

"Oops!" said Uncle Andy, right after blasting the wettest sounding fart that I'd ever heard. "Been drinking too much tea again!"

"Really, Andy, do you have to do that in front of our company?" asked Greta, shaking her head.

"Oh, if they're drinking the tea, then I'm sure they understand. Don't you, kids?"

He didn't wait for our answer. Instead, another fart slipped out. I swore this one sounded like a musical instrument, starting out loud and flat before it turned into the kind that ended with a squeak.

From that moment on, we knew we wanted to be on our own for most of the day.

"I think I see the reason now for the peeling wallpaper," joked Sadie as we left the house. "It's from all the tea farts!"

I could tell the jokes were starting to get to Kennedi, and the purple-haired goblin girl's shoulders slumped as we walked toward the beach. I put my arm around her waist and pulled her close.

"It's all in good fun, I promise," I told her. "Your aunt and uncle are great people."

"Really? You really think that?" she asked, her heart in her eyes.

I nodded. "They're a little odd, but who isn't? And it's obvious that they care a great deal about being good hosts for us. It was a great idea to come here."

I think she really needed to hear that and Kennedi perked up once our feet hit the sand.

There weren't many people out on the beach, mostly because Green Goblin Beach was so small in size. I only spotted a few couples and one family out there by the time we arrived, but we picked a spot far enough away from them, which was probably a good thing as the girls started to remove their clothes, revealing their bikinis.

At that moment, I felt like I was about to start shooting for a fantasy girl calendar. Each and every one of my girls looked immaculate and sexy, like they were born to prance around in tiny swimwear. Not only were Kennedi and Bridgette sultry in their tiny string bikinis but even Nikki and Cassidy, the two not known exclusively for their sexiness, looked stunning in simple two-pieces.

"Stop for a second, I think we're giving Kevin a heart attack," joked Paulina, right as she was about to pull her shirt over her head.

"No, don't stop on my account," I said, putting up my hands. "If I die right now, at least I'll die happy."

"If you die right now, I'm going to be seriously pissed at you," said Sadie, planting her hands on her hips.

"No one's going to die anytime soon," said Bridgette, shaking her head as she rubbed some sunscreen onto that delectably juicy ass of hers. "We're going to have so many decades of unbelievable love, sex, and tenderness. And more sex."

"Especially sex," added Kennedi, right before squirting an obscene amount of sunscreen on her chest. "Kevin, will you rub me down please? Don't be afraid to get into every nook and cranny on my body."

"Oh, I'm next!" shouted Sadie. "I'm next!"

I was more than happy to help the girls with their sunscreen, despite the fact that they kept adding squirts over their erogenous parts just to get me to touch them. It became especially bad when Nikki tried to do it as well, squirting a fat dollop right over the bottom of her swimsuit and spreading her legs for me.

“Nikki, you’re supposed to do it on the bare skin,” said Bridgette with a laugh. “Not directly on your suit.”

“But I want him to touch my pussy,” said Nikki, pouting. “How else am I supposed to make that happen?”

We all laughed at the dark elf, and I did my best to spread around the love (even dipping my fingers under her suit to satisfy her urge). Even Cassidy got in on the deal, turning a heavy shade of red as my hands caressed her breasts while rubbing in the lotion.

“That feels so wonderfully nice,” said Cassidy, as red as a tomato. “I can see why the other girls like it so much.”

“Wait until you play hide the pickle with him,” said Kennedi. “Then you’ll really understand why it feels nice.”

“Hide the pickle?” questioned Cassidy, not getting the reference. “Who said anything about a pickle?”

Kennedi put her arm around the centaur. “Oh, I still have so much to teach you. So very much.”

Once we’d destroyed the bottle of sunscreen, the group started to split up. Cassidy, Sadie, and Nikki decided they wanted to make the biggest sandcastle on the beach, and they moved a short distance away as they began pulling as much sand as they could into one big pile. Bridgette and Kennedi went down to the water, rubbing it over their skin and looking like goddesses in the early morning sun.

Only Paulina seemed to be tied to her work phone. She was sitting in the sand wearing a visor while her fingers tapped away at the screen. I could spy just the tiniest bump in her stomach, right where our baby was growing inside.

“Paulina, I really hope you’re not working,” I said, sitting down next to her while trying to get a glimpse of her screen. Sure enough, she was looking at the cleaning schedule for the week after we returned and was making some adjustments.

“Sorry, it’s hard to turn it off,” said Paulina, still typing away.

“But we’re on vacation,” I said. “Anything else can wait.”

When she didn’t respond, I gave her a stern look. “As the CHO of this organization, I demand you put that phone down.”

My firm tone had the desired effect. Paulina pouted as she put the phone down. It took her a few seconds to realize that she still outranked me though, and she picked it up once again.

“I’ll be done in five minutes,” she said, still typing away. I heard a sudden ding of a new incoming email on her phone, which actually made Paulina pause as she read it. A concerned look appeared on her face, and I could tell she was truly at a loss to comprehend whatever was in this email.

“Everything okay?” I asked her. “What did you just get?”

Paulina shook her head and tapped the corner, which I knew to be the button to delete whatever she just received. “Nothing important. Just spam.”

I wasn’t sure that I believed it. Spam didn’t cause that kind of reaction, but Paulina looked like she was ready to move on from it when she put her phone away and stood up suddenly. “Okay, I’m all finished, I promise. Let’s have some fun!”

I didn’t say anything more about the email as she took my hand and led me to the water, where Bridgette and Kennedi were now standing in the low-lying waves. The other two women didn’t stay there long, returning to our towels so that they could lay out in the sun. I noticed they untied their bikini tops though, hoping to avoid tan lines. In the process, they made a nearby group of boys nearly run headfirst into the sandcastle that was coming along nicely a short distance away.

“Hey, watch it!” growled Nikki, right as one of their towers was demolished.

“S-sorry,” said one of the boys, his eyes still glued to Kennedi’s chest.

“Mortals,” muttered Nikki as they walked away. “I’ll sacrifice your hearts for your insolence.”

By the time I turned my attention back to Paulina, I could see the diminutive goblin girl had already gotten further into the water. It was now

up to her waist, which meant that when I joined her, it was about up to my middle thigh. Paulina then surprised me by jumping into my arms.

“Protect me from the waves, handsome man!” she shrieked, right before a wave almost swept my feet out from under me.

From that moment on, we did nothing but frolic in the surf. Every time a new wave appeared in front of us, Paulina either tried to jump over it or jump into my arms to avoid getting soaked. After five minutes of doing this, we were both soaking wet, and her dark hair was clinging to her scalp.

“So not fair,” she said, spitting water out of her mouth. “You’re so much taller, and you can practically step over the waves. It just swallows me whole and shoots me back to the sand.”

“Are you saying you wish I wasn’t so tall?” I replied. “Because if memory serves, my height is one of the things you love about me.”

“This is true,” said Paulina, nodding. “But do you have to be *so* tall?”

I didn’t get a chance to answer her because she was pounded by another wave at that very moment, sending her careening backward. I raced over to her spot and pulled her out of the water, cradling her in my arms.

“My hero,” she purred, leaning up to kiss me. “Thanks for rescuing me.”

“I bet you’re glad that I’m as tall as I am now,” I teased, right as she missed another wave because I was holding her above the water line.

“I guess I can learn to live with it.”

“I’m so happy to hear you say that.”

We played in the water for nearly half an hour before we returned to the sand. Bridgette and Kennedi had turned on their backs now, the strings from their bikinis laying out on either side of them. The sandcastle being built by the other girls was coming along nicely, and Paulina and I decided we were going to pitch in to help them finish it.

“What can we help with?” I asked, grabbing one of the buckets that was full of wet sand.

Cassidy pursed her lips and squinted as she looked at the castle that was being formed in front of us. I could tell I was truly watching an artist at

work as she decided where we would need to go.

“Right on the southwest corner,” she said. “The sand is starting to crumble there, so if you can firm up the outer perimeter, that would be spectacular.”

Paulina saluted. “Yes, ma’am. We’ll give you the finest sand castle perimeter wall you’ve ever seen, ma’am.”

Cassidy pouted. “Are you making fun of me?”

“No, ma’am,” I answered. “We’d never dream of it.”

Cassidy growled at us, which only made Paulina and me laugh as we moved to the southwest corner.

I’d made several pretty decent sandcastles in my life, but nothing compared to the *palace* that was made by the time we were done. The entire thing sat on a base that was nearly five feet long and wide, making it truly gargantuan. Cassidy’s attention to detail was really on display, because every tower that appeared on the structure was shaped differently from the design at the bottom of the bucket.

It was even surrounded by a proper moat, which I had the distinct honor of digging all the way to the ocean, allowing water to fill up the channel every time we received a large wave.

“It’s just beautiful,” whispered Sadie once we were all done.

“I’ve never seen a more magnificent sandcastle in my life,” Paulina agreed.

“Nor will we ever again,” I said.

Cassidy brushed the sand off her hands and smiled. “Not bad for a morning’s work. I think we can expand it on the north side though to make it even bigger! Maybe double the footprint!”

We all gave her a look like she was crazy. I think Cassidy understood at that point that any new additions were going to be done exclusively by her.

“Er, maybe we can all add onto it tomorrow,” said Cassidy tentatively. “That is, if you’re all willing?”

I put my arm around her waist. “Tomorrow sounds great. Let’s admire our handiwork for now, and if it’s still standing tomorrow, we can come back to it.”

That was good enough for Cassidy, and we rejoined the other girls who were in the middle of getting up. Before anything else could happen, Kennedi brought up a great idea.

“Who’s in the mood for snow cones?” she asked excitedly. “I almost forgot there’s this great place right on the bluff! It’s fantastic, and they have a strawberry snow cone that’s literally to die for!”

“I could really go for a snow cone!” said Cassidy, her mood turning around already from the sandcastle.

“I bet we all could,” said Paulina. “It’s so hot out that it would be really refreshing right now.”

I could spy the snow cone place from where I was standing, that made it an easy decision for me.

“I’ll get one for everyone,” I said, right as I started walking toward the bluff. “Hang tight, I’ll be back in a little bit.”

“Get me a large one please!” bellowed Kennedi right before I could get away.

I chuckled under my breath as I marched all the way up the bluff. When I arrived at the tiny snow cone store, I could see there was a group just in front of me waiting for their turn. It looked like half the group didn’t know what they wanted, so I leaned against a pole as I waited for them to be done.

It was as I glanced back toward the beach that I noticed something flapping that was attached to the pole. I stopped leaning against it and pivoted, seeing there were numerous flyers and help-wanted ads already posted to it. It was a good glimpse into life at Green Goblin Beach, since half the flyers were about local stores needing to hire an extra hand, while a few were getting the word out about missing pets.

There was one in particular that caught my attention, one that was different from the rest. It was a flier for a meet-and-greet event with the

Cursed Coven, one of the witching teams that we'd watched a few months ago during the Enchanted Festival. The Cursed Coven won an upset match against a local juggernaut team, creating quite the spectacle in the process.

There was another reason they were familiar to me. I knew that Cassidy was a fan of the sport, especially the Cursed Coven. And just like that, an idea was born.

I ripped off one of the information slots from the flier, putting it in my trunks. The meet-and-greet would be happening in the coming week in the city, and instantly I knew it would be a great date opportunity for Cassidy and me.

And it would certainly be different from what we normally did.

Grinning about my stroke of luck, I approached the snow cone counter once the other group was finished.

"Hello there," I said. "Can I get seven large strawberry snow cones?"

The elderly goblin woman behind the counter smiled at me and rang up my order. There was a flirtatious look in her eyes, especially when she gave me the total.

"That will be seven opals," she said, before leaning in close and fluttering her eyelashes. "It's normally fourteen, but I gave you the cutie-patootie discount."

She was old enough to be my grandmother, but I supposed that the attraction of goblins to humans lasted for their entire lives. Either way, I wasn't about to stick my nose up, even if it was called the cutie-patootie discount.

"Um, thank you!" I said, once she handed me a tray of snow cones.

"Come back and see me anytime!" she said, checking me out as I walked away. "I have other treats that you might want to sample!"

I beat a hasty retreat out of the snow cone place, if only because I had enough goblin girls on my hands. Still, it was shaping up to be a wonderful day, and as I gazed down at my girls on the beach, I couldn't help but be thankful for everything that made this possible.

The snow cone was the cherry on top.

Dinner that evening was pretty normal, at least normal for Andy and Greta. The tea that Greta made wasn't nearly as fart-inducing for Andy, so we didn't have nearly as many things to laugh about. The food was excellent too, and I had trouble walking away from the table without completely cleaning my plate.

Everything was going almost too well until Greta brought out a plate of mushrooms as a dessert.

"And now, let's see what kind of visions we can conjure with these lovely pink mushrooms," said Greta, putting them on the table.

Immediately, my gaze shot to Nikki. I knew she had a problem with pink mushrooms in the past, and it was a condition of her employment with us that she had to stay away from them. I was worried about her sliding back into the old Nikki, but to my surprise, she didn't even reach for one.

In fact, she didn't so much as break a sweat from temptation. I was so proud of her that I said something long after dinner was over.

"Nikki, you didn't touch a single pink mushroom," I said, once we were alone. "I don't think you even looked at the plate. That's so awesome! I can't tell you how happy that makes me to see that."

Nikki let out a begrudging smile. "Don't get me wrong—I was tempted. They just smelled so divine, and I could tell they were freshly-picked by that sweet aroma coming off the plate."

That was one area where we differed. To me, pink mushrooms always had this really earthy scent that was in no way appealing whatsoever.

"But do you know what really made it easy for me to avoid them?" asked Nikki.

"No, what?"

The dark elf took her silver ponytail and started to stroke it. "I guess I just thought about what would happen if I let loose with them. I knew you and Paulina would be upset with me, and it would probably mean my job. I need the money, but more importantly than that, I need the family aspect

that working here brings. And I don’t want to disappoint the people that are like family to me.”

I couldn’t help myself. I pulled the demon-worshiping elf to me and squeezed her tight. I didn’t have many words for how proud of her I was, or how thankful I was that she was able to turn down the mushrooms, but I knew the best way to convey the idea when words failed.

“Mmm, yeah, keep going,” muttered Nikki, after I kissed her. “Is that all it takes to get a little kiss around here?”

“It takes even less than that,” I replied, touching her lips with my thumb. “All you have to do is ask.”

“I’m going to be asking more often then,” she said. “Maybe I need more temptation in my life if that’s going to be your reaction?”

“One step at a time,” I said, chuckling. “I’m just really proud of you right now.”

A weird look appeared in her eyes. “No one’s ever said that to me before.”

That hit me right in the heart, and it wasn’t hard to see why. On the face of it, Nikki liked to present an attitude of someone that marched to their own drum, someone who didn’t need or want anyone else’s approval.

And yet, to see her display so much vulnerability to me right now showed just how far she’d come.

“I promise you that I’ll tell you that more often,” I said, squeezing her hand as we walked away. “A lot more.”

Nikki gave me a rare smile. “I think I’d like that very much.”

Nikki’s triumph wasn’t the only notable thing to happen after dinner. Ever since I met Kennedi’s aunt and uncle, I’d been having this really odd sense of deja vu, like there was something or someone from my past that I was forgetting. Or possibly someone that reminded me of Andy and Greta. It wasn’t until a casual chat with Andy that it finally dawned on me.

“So Kennedi tells me that you’re not working out of the duplex any longer?” said Andy, once we were sitting around the television on a couch that had lost much of its firmness. I was sinking into the back and

constantly having to adjust myself. Andy was having the same issue by the looks of it, but it seemed like he was more used to it than I was.

“No, it just got too crowded with all the help that we have now,” I said. “Paulina was running the business out of her bedroom, and where we live wasn’t exactly central to most of our clients. Once we had some money saved up, we bought the new office downtown.”

“I bet that cost a small fortune,” said Andy, letting out a full-body shudder. “I hate everything to do with real estate. Really, anything to do with houses to be honest. I’m not the most handy of goblins so dealing with anything that breaks or needs fixed is a bugaboo for me.”

I opened my mouth to say that maintaining an office space was different than maintaining a house, but it was the mention of real estate that made my feeling of deja vu smack me right in the face.

And it reminded me of another aging hippie—Blossom, the goblin woman that we purchased the office through. And seeing as there couldn’t be too many goblin hippies even in a city the size of Dragonmont, I thought it was worth bringing it up.

“Do you still know a lot of people inside the city?” I asked him, after adjusting myself one more time. “Any old friends or connections?”

Andy blew a raspberry. “Of course. You don’t get to be my age without making a lot of connections. Many of them have withered over the years, and there are some that I just flat-out lost touch with. Getting old can be disappointing in that way.”

“By any chance, did you ever know a real estate agent named Blossom?” I asked, throwing it out there like a piece of meat in front of a bewildered lion.

In this case, the lion pounced on the meat and looked around for seconds. Andy suddenly grabbed my arm as his mouth fell open.

“You know Blossom?” he asked in a near whisper. “How do you know Blossom?”

“I wouldn’t say I know her to be quite honest,” I said. “I know *of* her. She was our agent when we purchased the office. All this talk about real estate

just jogged my memory."

Andy covered his mouth with his hand as he leaned back in his chair. What looked like a lifetime of memories could be seen on his face, and when his eyes met mine again, I could see a true sense of loss.

"I haven't seen her in more than thirty years," said Andy. "But I can still see her face as clearly as if it were yesterday. At one point in time, Blossom and Greta were as thick as thieves. Best friends if you will, and Blossom was part of our relationship."

That seemed to make a lot of sense. "Blossom was in your harem?"

He nodded quickly. "She was such a firecracker back then. I've never met a woman more in touch with the universe and the stars than Blossom was."

I wasn't sure if I wanted to know what that meant, but now I had to know what happened.

"You all had a falling out, didn't you?"

Andy nodded again as a scowl filled his face. "Over something stupid. Wouldn't that figure? It's always over something stupid. The last thing I remembered was her and Greta getting into some kind of fight, and Blossom came to me to decide who was right. I'm old enough now to know to never take sides in that kind of thing, but the younger me didn't have that knowledge. I foolishly took Greta's side and made it sound like Blossom's idea wasn't a good one. She never forgave me after that. And you want to know something?"

Andy gulped hard. "I don't even remember what it was about! An entire relationship thrown away about something that wasn't even important enough to maintain the memory."

"I'm sure that has to be hard on you," I said. "And Greta too."

"Greta cried for weeks," admitted Andy. "Especially when it seemed like Blossom wasn't coming back. We tried to reach out to her, but she cut us off completely. Shortly after, she moved and we never figured out where she moved to. Back then, you couldn't just look it up on the internet machine like you kids can."

"You mean a computer," I said dryly.

“Whatever it’s called,” he said, shaking his hand. “What I wouldn’t give to see her again. Even after all this time, I still miss her.”

“Surely it can’t be that hard to track her down,” I said. “It’s just like you said—you can find just about anyone thanks to the internet these days. We got lucky because she was our realtor, but I’m sure if we look up her website, we can arrange a meeting quite easily.”

“I don’t even know what I’d say to her,” said Andy. “I’m sorry? Is that enough to get over thirty years of turmoil? Would she even want to hear what we had to say after all this time?”

“It couldn’t hurt to try though, right? You still feel this strongly about her after all this time. Why wouldn’t you reach out to her?”

Andy shifted in his seat. “Part of me wonders whether she still hates us? Whether she’s forgotten about us after all this time?”

“I don’t think she has,” I said. “She told us about being in a harem the first time we met her. By the sound of it, she looked at it as a fond memory of her life. What could it hurt to see if she wants to talk to you?”

Andy took a long time to respond. “I guess I’m just nervous. I’m afraid of rejection. I’m afraid to admit to her that I let thirty years pass without trying sooner. I think that’s more damning than anything else.”

“Maybe so, but better late than never, right? And maybe she feels just as foolish for letting it go as long as she did? Who knows, but you’ll never figure it out if we don’t try. In fact, I’m going to try. As long as that’s something that would make you and Greta happy?”

A small smile appeared on his face. “Greta would be over the moon. And I would be too.”

“Say no more then,” I said, tapping my knee. “I’ll see what I can do.”

I wasn’t expecting him to barrel out of that chair and try to hug me. And I *really* wasn’t expecting him to let out a juicy fart when he was hunched over either.

“You’re a good person, Kevin,” he said, patting my back heartily. “I can see why so many of these women care about you. And please excuse my

farts. You never know what you're going to get with some of these herbs that Greta uses."

"Don't mention it," I said, squinting my eyes as the smell stung my nose.

Chapter Six

Hearing about Andy and Greta's connection to Blossom made a whole lot of sense to me. After all, I didn't think there could be that many aging hippies in this world, especially since we kept meeting most of them.

I let Kennedi know about my discovery, and she vowed to help me locate Blossom once we were back in the city.

"How hard could it be after all?" asked Kennedi. "Real estate agents want to be found, so I'm sure it's just a matter of looking her up and getting an appointment."

"After that, then it's in your aunt and uncle's hands," I said. "And Blossom's too, if she decides she wants to meet with them."

Kennedi tilted her head as she stared out into the distance. "I wonder if it was the tea farts that made her leave?"

"I'm sure that didn't help the situation," I said, making Kennedi giggle.

"No doubt they'll appreciate you trying though," she said, putting her head against my chest. "Besides, us harem-minded people need to stick together."

"Don't we always?"

I was feeling better about the situation having secured Kennedi's help, and I didn't think it would be any problem once we were back.

I did have two more inquiries I wanted to make before I could call it a night. For that, I had to use Paulina's computer, and I had to find a spot where I could be alone. Paulina gave up her computer all too quickly, mostly because she was tied to her phone that evening. Getting alone proved to be even more challenging than I expected in a house full of hippies and girls, but I managed to find a spot on the deck.

The first inquiry was getting registered so that Cassidy and I could meet the Cursed Coven. That proved to be surprisingly easy, and within about two minutes, I had us down for the meet-and-greet once we got back.

The second inquiry proved to be more challenging. That was about finding a bed for Cassidy, and there were only two companies in the entire city that specialized in beds for centaurs. The worst part about that was the both companies were so backed up that they weren't even taking orders for the time being.

I cursed myself for waiting so long to do it, but I knew it was a bigger deal to me than it was for Cassidy. Still, I wouldn't be happy until I knew she had a real bed to call her own, so I decided to go down the rabbit hole of finding another company that could do a custom build.

I had just stumbled upon a website for a group of woodland gnome builders when the door to the deck opened.

"Kevin?" said Bridgette, seemingly relieved to find me. "I was looking all over for you. Are you going to be much longer on Paulina's computer?"

"That depends," I said, tapping my fingers against the table. "On how long it's going to take me to put in a custom order for furniture."

Bridgette lifted an eyebrow. "Oh! Whatcha ordering?"

Before I could shield my screen, the blonde goblin girl pounced on my lap. "Wow, custom beds! Are you ordering one like we have in the orgy room?"

"That's a tempting idea, but no," I said, shaking my head. "I'm trying to order a custom bed for Cassidy so she can get off the floor. And it's proving harder than I expected."

"I can't recall many places saying they advertise beds for centaurs," said Bridgette, tapping her cheek. "It's really a niche kind of request."

"But there are enough centaurs in Dragonmont City that it should be available," I said. "So far, the only two companies I've found aren't even taking orders. So maybe I can have some woodland gnomes do it for me?"

"Do they make other things besides beds?" she asked. "Because the reason I need the computer is because I also need to order something."

"What do you need?" I asked her, more out of my own curiosity.

Bridgette bit her lip like she didn't want to tell me. I didn't try to push the subject, but she came out with it anyway after enough time.

“I guess I can tell you since you’ll be enjoying it too,” said Bridgette with a smirk. “But I wanted to get a stripper pole put in Kennedi’s room. I think she’d absolutely love it.”

Before I could answer, visions of a purple-haired goblin vixen sliding down a pole filled my mind. I pictured Kennedi dancing to some raunchy 80s tune, flipping her hair backward while she ran her fingers down her body.

“See?” said Bridgette, snickering. “I knew you’d like that idea.”

“Well, I’m still a guy, and stripper poles are hot no matter what age you are,” I said. “Ask Andy. I bet you he’d agree with me.”

“No thanks, his farts are starting to make me dizzy.”

I laughed pretty hard at that, and Bridgette joined me soon after.

“Either way, I think Kennedi would enjoy it too,” she said. “And seeing as it’s the season of giving, I’d love to do that for her. And maybe teach her the ropes?”

“And I’d sure love to watch you both do it,” I added. “If you want, I can put your request in with mine? We’ll make quite the pair—the dual order of a centaur bed and a stripper pole.”

“We’ll definitely be memorable,” said Bridgette. “And we might even get a discount!”

As it turned out, Bridgette was right about that. Not only did the gnomes write me back quickly, but they agreed to do both the bed and the pole for us, with a slight discount on the pole because it was a secondary item. I was amazed at my good luck, especially when they let us know that the bed wouldn’t take much longer than two weeks to make.

It definitely made me feel better about not waiting for the other two companies to start taking orders again.

And once I saw that Cassidy truly had her own bed, I’d feel like we’d really become her primary home.

Everything was coming together almost too nicely. It was almost as if something should start going wrong to counteract all the good news.

Sure enough, bad news was coming. It just wasn't here yet.

On the morning of Christmas, we woke up to something that was quite the novelty in our fantasy world—snow.

Lots and lots of beautiful powder-like snow. So much of it, in fact, that I could barely make out the streets in front of Andy and Greta's house anymore. The landscape looked like it had been covered by a thick white blanket, making me grin from ear to ear.

I wasn't the only one that was happy to see the change in temperature. By the time breakfast was over, Kennedi and Greta had dug out a small mountain of winter clothing—everything from jackets and pants to boots and toboggans. We quickly got decked out in our snow gear and took our first step into the winter wonderland.

The chilliness of the weather hit my face from the moment we stepped outside. Gone was the perfect temperature that categorized a typical day in Dragonmont City. I'd almost forgotten what it was like to be truly cold, but I quickly remembered as I rushed to cover my hands with gloves.

"So much beautiful snow!" said Sadie with excitement, opening her arms and dancing around. "I think they get more snow up here than they do in the city!"

"Is it blowing anyone else's minds that we were just at the beach here yesterday?" I asked. "The sand was hot and the water was perfect. And now it's all covered in snow."

"Wait until tomorrow," said Paulina with a giggle. "When it's all gone and back to normal weather. That'll really blow your mind."

"If we don't blow away beforehand," said Cassidy, right as a gust of wind made her pull her jacket tight against her.

"Will you all cut it out?" snapped Kennedi suddenly. "You guys are making me horny with all this constant blowing talk."

Bridgette laughed so hard that she snorted. “Only you would hear the word blowing and think about giving head.”

“What? That’s a really natural connection I feel like,” defended Kennedi. “What do you think of when you hear the word blowing?”

“The wind,” said Paulina.

“A blow dryer,” said Sadie.

“Leaves and raking,” said Cassidy brightly.

Kennedi blew a raspberry. “You’re a bunch of virgins.”

I grabbed her by the hand to change the subject. “Come on, let’s go down to the beach and make a snowman.”

“Oh! You think our sandcastle is still there?” asked Cassidy.

It wasn’t still there, but that was okay. All the snow had crumbled most of the structure, and I suspected it probably had some help from the local kids too. Instead of worrying about the sandcastle, we set about building the biggest snowman possible.

Which ended up being nearly as tall as the house we were staying in.

“Okay, I don’t want to be the bearer of bad news, but how in the world are we going to get the head on this snowman?” asked Nikki, craning her neck to look at the two large mounds that made up the body that we had already constructed. Just those two round balls were nearly ten feet tall.

“Wait a second,” said Kennedi, pausing to look at all our faces. “How did we start talking about giving head again?”

“Not *giving* head,” said Sadie, shaking her head. “Putting the head on top, you horny slut.”

Kennedi looked insulted for about two seconds before nodding her head. “I am a horny slut. For Kevin.”

I glanced over at her. “I don’t suppose your aunt and uncle have a ladder, do they?”

“Are you kidding? Didn’t you notice all the burned-out light bulbs in the main chandelier? They don’t have anything in their garage except more

mushrooms.”

“So this might be a little challenging then,” I said, squinting my eyes as I studied the snowman. It took me a moment to think about it, but the idea came to me right after. “What happened to all the sand buckets that we used to make the castle? Are they still around?”

It turned out they were. Kennedi and Paulina ran back to the house and grabbed several of them while I tried to pull in more snow around the base of the snowman.

“Kevin, I’m still not seeing your idea on this one,” said Cassidy. “How are you going to use buckets to put a head on it?”

“Two ways,” I answered. “First, I need to make a ramp around the base of the snowman so that I can reach the top. I’d like all of you to help me do that. Once we’ve made the ramp, I can use the buckets to carry snow to the top and shape it while I’m up there. It might not look perfect, but it’ll be the best we can do without a ladder.”

“That’s actually surprisingly . . . perfect,” said Bridgette.

“Surprisingly?” repeated Paulina with a laugh. “You haven’t known Kevin for very long. Everything he does is perfect.”

“I wouldn’t say that, but it’ll be functional,” I said. “Come on, give me a hand with this ramp.”

With all seven of us pitching in, the ramp took shape rather quickly. It wasn’t the prettiest addition to the snowman, but it did what I wanted it to do when I could walk around the snowman without falling through the snow.

When I was able to stand on the ramp and reach above its head, I thought we were ready for phase two.

“Okay, start handing me buckets,” I said to the girls. “Just keep them coming. I might need to pause to shape it, but I’ll tell you when I need a break.”

“You got it, skipper!” said Sadie, giving me a crisp salute before handing me the first bucket of snow.

From there, I had the awkward position of trying to maintain my balance while adding snow to the top. What made it so difficult was that half the snow wanted to slide down the body of the snowman. I quickly found that it was best to start with a small ball and build upon that, steadily making it bigger.

After about fifteen minutes of continual snow and shaping, I finally had something that resembled a head. It was far from perfect, but once it was large enough, I could put the finishing touches on.

“Here, baby,” said Paulina brightly, handing me several dark-colored rocks, a carrot, and two large stalks of celery. “Complete the masterpiece for us?”

I knew what the carrot and the rocks were for, but I was drawing a blank when it came to the celery. “Um, Paulina, what’s this for?”

She planted her hands on her delectable hips. “It’s for the ears, silly. Especially if it’s going to be a proper snow-goblin!”

Suddenly, it all made sense to me. I planted those stalks of celery on either side of its head and stood back to admire our handiwork. Our own snow-goblin, which was taller than most of the houses on Green Goblin Beach, stared back at me.

“It’s so beautiful,” said Kennedi, with tears in her eyes. “So very beautiful.”

We all took turns taking pictures in front of the snow-goblin. Of course, Nikki wanted to make a few changes though, replacing the eyes with red jelly beans instead.

“Now it’s a demon!” she said excitedly. “Get it? Take our picture please!”

Nikki got her demon picture. I suspected she would treasure it for the rest of her life.

By the time the day was about over, we’d almost had too much fun. At one point, I even stopped back at the snow cone place, which just for today was rebranded to offer hot cocoa instead. It was still manned by the same older goblin lady, who looked totally enthralled when she saw me coming.

“Hey there, hot stuff,” she said, putting both elbows on the counter. “Are you here to show me a good time?”

I hated to disappoint her, but thankfully she didn’t seem too let down when I bought extra large mugs of hot cocoa for everyone.

“I get off at five!” she called out to me as I walked away. “And when I get off, *you* get off!”

It was a pretty perfect day. When we got home, we had a grand Christmas dinner waiting for us. Greta really went all out, making two hams and a turkey just for us, alongside just about every kind of potato dish that you could imagine, and numerous vegetables to go with it.

She even had freshly-made rolls.

“Kennedi, would you butter my roll for me?” I asked, since she was situated closest to the butter.

“Every day of your life, babe!” she retorted, not even missing a beat. We all laughed around the table, and the goodwill didn’t stop until everyone’s plate was empty and their stomachs were full.

Well, almost everyone. I noticed during dinner that Paulina was being quiet. After dinner, we all sat around to drink some tea and watch television. Andy explained that they didn’t exchange gifts during Christmas, since it was only a “farce designed to enrich our corporate overlords at our own expense.” That didn’t bother me at all, but what did was seeing Paulina glancing at her phone continually. The last time she did it, she looked particularly troubled.

So when the rest of the family was absorbed by the television, I pulled Paulina to the side.

“I can tell something’s bothering you,” I said, glancing down at her phone. “And I know it has to do with the phone. What’s going on? What’s wrong?”

Paulina chewed on her lip as she studied my face for a moment. It wasn’t hard to see that whatever it was, she didn’t want to tell me. Finally, she shifted onto one foot as she passed her phone over to me. By the looks of it, the troubling item was an email.

Paulina,

You can't ignore us forever. How many more times do I need to reach out? I'll send a message to you daily, as well as text and call every hour until you agree to a meeting. You need to hear what I have to say. Respond back and let's talk.

Esther

EHS

"Wait a second," I said, handing the phone back to her. "That's bearded Esther, right? What the hell is this all about?"

"She wants a meeting with us," said Paulina. "And now that she works at EHS, you can guess what that meeting is going to be about."

"Then block her," I growled. "She'll get the picture really fast if you're not responding."

"I did," said Paulina. "Look at her email address. It's not her EHS one. She keeps making up new ones as soon as I block the old ones."

My shoulders slumped at hearing that. "Wait a second. How long has this been going on?"

Paulina looked slightly guilty. "Since the day the inspector came. I'm thinking they got word we're seeking a business rating, and they're trying to manage this before we take even more business from them. That or they're still pissed about us taking the mayor from them."

"They never would have won the mayor, or his wife and mother, to begin with," I said, blowing air out of my mouth.

"Maybe not, but Esther has been relentless," said Paulina. "You should see the texts. And all the calls. She won't stop."

Now that she mentioned it, it had seemed like Paulina was extra glued to her phone during this trip. And it made me angry that it was all about this bullshit instead of legitimate work.

"Then keep blocking her," I said, crossing my arms. "She'll get the picture eventually."

“You don’t know Esther though,” said Paulina. “I’m afraid that she’s going to start showing up at the office next.”

“So what? If that’s the case, we’ll shut it down right then and there. But I’m not going to let her harass you like this, especially if she thinks she can just wear you down. And there are ways to solve the harassment problem.”

Paulina bit her lip. “I had a feeling this day would come though. EHS has been buying up any maid service that’s remotely a threat to them. I’d say we’re more of a threat than most. Are we finally their target? Are they going to try to buy us next?”

“They can’t make us do anything we don’t want to do,” I said, pulling her to me. “There’s no law that says we have to accept their offers. We’re not for sale.”

“I just question if they’re truly going to hear that message though,” whispered Paulina.

I kissed her gently. “Leave it to me. I’m going to respond to Esther with two words—not interested. I’m not going to have her harassing you over this. If she doesn’t like it, then she can have her beef with me.”

“But that’s going to just add things to your plate, babe,” said Paulina. “I don’t want to do that.”

“I’d rather have more on my plate than more on yours,” I said, touching her bump gently. “I gotta take care of my baby momma after all.”

That finally earned a smile, even if it was a tiny one. “Ugh, these EHS people are vile. I never want to hear those initials put together again.”

“Esther fits right in with that bunch,” I said. “But she’ll know our final answer soon enough. Even if I have to staple it to her bearded chin.”

Paulina giggled. “How do you do it?”

“Do what exactly? Staple it to her bearded chin? Well, I figure it won’t be too hard if you just get the right stapler.”

“No, I mean make me feel better when I feel like crap,” said Paulina, toying with my shirt. “You have this amazing ability to take away anything that’s troubling me.”

“Sounds like you ought to stay with me for the long term then.”

“Oh, don’t you worry about that,” she said, her eyes dancing as she rubbed her stomach. “I’ve got you trapped now.”

I made a shocked face. “That was your plan all along? Get knocked up and trap me in this devil harem?”

“Well, we only added the devil part because of Nikki, but that’s the gist of it.”

We both laughed. “Sign me up every day of my life,” I said. “Because there’s nowhere else I’d rather be.”

Paulina moaned softly. “Me too, baby. Me too.”

Chapter Seven

It was like everything went back to normal the day after Christmas.

I woke up, still hungover on Greta's herbal eggnog, expecting to see the snowy wonderland outside only to be greeted by the sight of the tranquil beach. Normality had returned, and that meant that our holiday had come to a close.

"Are you sure you can't stay a few more days?" asked Greta as we said our goodbyes. "Thursday night we're having a potluck with a few of the neighbors, and we'd be delighted if you could stay!"

"We'd love to, Aunt Greta, but we really need to be getting back," said Kennedi, after a round of hugs. "The company isn't going to run if half of its members aren't in the city."

"We had an amazing time though," said Paulina. "Thank you for letting us stay with you during the holiday."

"A very good time," I added. "We appreciate everything."

Greta took a little longer with my hug than she did with the others. When I pulled away, I could see that her eyes were misty.

"Andy told me that you met Blossom and that you were going to try to find her again," she said quietly. "I wish you all the luck in the world. And if you find her again, will you tell her how sorry I am? Even if she doesn't want to meet with us again, just make sure she knows that we're truly sorry?"

"You have my word," I promised. "And we will find her. I have no doubt about that."

Greta hugged me again tightly before she finally let go. With the last goodbyes, we took off, leaving Green Goblin Beach behind us. The dragon ride back to the city was quiet as all of us digested the last memories of the holiday. By the time we were flying over our neighborhood, I think all of us were ready to get back to normal life.

The next day, we were all back to work like we hadn't just taken four days off. Gina was back in the kitchens cooking us lunch while Kennedi and

Sadie played more *Grand Theft Auto* in the break room.

“You know, maybe you’d start winning more if you got rid of that yee-yee ass haircut,” said Kennedi, taunting Sadie once again.

“What does that even mean?” said a shocked Sadie, one hand going to her red locks. “What’s wrong with my hair?”

Kennedi started snickering, but I didn’t hear her response as I walked by the break room and kept moving all the way to Paulina’s office, who started gesturing excitedly as soon as she saw me.

“That’s fantastic news!” said Paulina into her phone, breaking out into a wide smile. “I can’t believe it!”

I couldn’t wait to hear what this was all about, and it was hell waiting for Paulina to get off the phone, especially since I could only get bits and pieces of the conversation.

“I really didn’t expect it,” said Paulina. “I mean, I knew I’d hear from you eventually, but to have it be this good, it’s just amazing! Fantastic! So when does it arrive? A few days? Perfect, I can’t wait to display it in the office.”

By the time she hung up the phone, Paulina bounded out of her chair and practically leapt in my lap, covering my face in kisses.

“Tell me, tell me, tell me,” I said during the first and only time when Paulina’s lips weren’t my top priority. “What was that phone call about?”

She leaned back and gazed at me lovingly. “Guess which business just got their rating issued today?”

Suddenly, it all made sense. My eyes went wide.

“Today? Really? What did we get?” I asked. “Did we get an A? We had to have gotten an A with this much excitement.”

She grinned and leaned in closer, putting her lips tantalizingly close to my ear. “Even better.”

“An A+?”

“An A++,” said Paulina, emphasizing the plus twice. “We got a perfect score across the board. Our finances are in excellent shape. Our maids are

professional and cordial. Our office is clean, well-organized, and well-maintained. And my personal favorite is that the leadership team has a clear vision of the future of Goblin Girl Maid Service as well as the road map for how to get there."

"I like that too," I said. "She must have been very impressed by you."

"She was impressed by *us*, love," said Paulina, kissing my nose. "And now she's sending a plaque our way, something we can display in the lobby that proudly broadcasts our rating to all visitors. It's the last thing we needed. We can stand on level footing with any competitor now. We can bid on *anything*, Kevin. This is so important that it's going to blow the lid off everything that we're doing right now."

"We're going to need even more girls," I said. "A lot more. If we get half of the properties that have expressed interest, we're going to need to hire. And I'm sure there will be a small wave that comes up from this too."

"A tidal wave!" said Paulina. "But we need to apply more too. I want every bid that we apply to moving forward to display our rating. And I want to put out a fresh push, even on properties that have rejected us in the past. Let's see what they think of us now!"

Before I could respond, there was a knock at Paulina's door. We both turned our heads to see Misty, our catgirl receptionist standing at the door.

"Sorry to bother you, Paulina, but you have a phone call from Esther at EHS," said Misty, wincing as soon as that acronym left her mouth. "Do you want to take it?"

"Tell her we're not interested and then hang up the phone," I said, turning to look at Paulina. "Some people never learn."

I think Misty was surprised by the tone in my voice, but she shrugged and left the office to take care of it.

"Now she's calling the office regularly," said Paulina, shaking her head. "That woman doesn't take no for an answer."

"She'll get the message eventually," I said. "Either way, I'm not going to let Esther spoil what should be great news."

Paulina smiled. “She couldn’t ruin it if she tried. This is a testament to how far we’ve come. And I’m so happy to spend this moment with you.”

“The feeling’s mutual, babe.”

“Oh my goodness, I love it! Love it, love it, love it!”

I could hear Kennedi’s shriek from all the way across the duplex. It had been a few days since we got our rating, and we’d just returned home from the office about an hour ago. I had a nagging suspicion I knew what Kennedi’s excitement was about, and it was confirmed the moment I arrived at her room.

Inside, I saw something that made my pants tighter instantly. A scantily-clad Kennedi was wearing black lingerie and swinging around a newly-installed stripper pole in her room while Bridgette looked on with approval.

“You have no idea how fun this is!” said Kennedi, whipping around the pole and tossing her hair with it. “I’ve wanted one for so long!”

Bridgette laughed. “I’m surprised you didn’t just go out and buy one on your own.”

“I’m glad I didn’t or I’d have two now,” said Kennedi, before she stopped abruptly. “Wait a second. Maybe we should get another! That way, we can both put on a show at the same time for Kevin!”

“And give me more of a heart attack than you already are?” I asked from the door.

As soon as Kennedi saw me, she rushed off the pole and pulled me inside. Grabbing a chair that was sitting against her desk, she positioned it right next to the pole and made me sit down.

“How about a lap dance, hunky?” she said, hooking her leg around the pole and leaning back against me.

“Hold on, you’re going to fall that way,” said Bridgette, obviously getting a lot of enjoyment out of watching Kennedi’s moves. “And it’s so not sexy

if you just fall on your client."

Sure enough, Kennedi lost her grip and her tush promptly fell into my lap. She turned her head at me slowly as she blushed. "Oops."

"Let's master one pole first before we think about another, okay?" said Bridgette, helping her off my lap. "Here, let me show you one of my signature moves."

"Do you have any moves that will make Kevin cum in his pants in about ten seconds?" asked Kennedi excitedly. "Because if you do, I want to learn them right now!"

Bridgette blew a raspberry. "Ten seconds? Try *five*. I'm damn good at what I do."

She couldn't have been more right. Bridgette's display over the next couple minutes pulled me right to the brink. There was just something magically seductive about the way she moved those hips, working that pole like it was an extension of her own body. Even Kennedi was in awe as we watched her. Bridgette was the ultimate combination of grace and sexiness, and even before she finished her act, I had thoughts about taking these two gorgeous women to bed.

If only we ever got there.

Somewhere in my brain, I registered the sound of our doorbell. At the time, I didn't think anything of it. Our doorbell rang all the time with deliveries, and I was certain that somebody would grab it so I could continue this feast of flesh for my eyes.

Somebody did get the door eventually, but when Cassidy appeared at Kennedi's door before Bridgette could finish, I knew something wasn't right.

"Paulina's asking for you," said Cassidy. "We have a visitor and you need to see this."

That was the first and only time I ever scowled at Cassidy. Mostly because when I stood up, my cock was so hard that I could have pointed the way to the front door.

“Well *hello* to you, my giant friend,” said Kennedi, dropping to her knees and stroking my cock through my pants. She then turned to Cassidy. “Are you sure you need him?”

Even Cassidy’s eyes were glued to my crotch. Unfortunately, the next sentence out of her mouth only made me angrier.

“EHS is at the front door,” said Cassidy, wincing as soon as she said it. “So yeah, it’s pretty important.”

It was only rarely that I got this mad. I understood now why Paulina wanted me so urgently, but I was more pissed about being disturbed during my time with the girls, especially for a company as smug, self-important, and uninvited as EHS.

“I’ve never seen him so angry before,” Bridgette whispered to Kennedi, as they watched steam erupt from my ears.

“I know, right?” said Kennedi. “It’s kinda turning me on.”

“Where are those jackals?” I growled at Cassidy. “I’m going to jam my answer so far up their asses that they're going to choke on it.”

“Choke me instead, daddy,” whimpered Kennedi, drawing everyone’s attention to her. Kennedi blushed and smiled awkwardly before turning away.

I stormed down the hall with Cassidy, and I found that my cock deflated every step of the way. It was just another offense I was going to add onto EHS’ plate. By the time I reached the front vestibule, I saw Paulina standing there with a save-me expression on her face. There were two other women standing next to her.

The first was one I recognized. Mostly, it was because of the beard. Apart from my great Aunt Sally, I hadn’t met any other females with facial hair, so I remembered Esther’s face easily. The dwarf woman looked just as smug as always, crossing her arms as she silently appraised our duplex.

The woman with her was a fairy by the looks of her, her diminutive stature standing out above all else. She hovered about a foot off the ground thanks to her wings, but there was nothing that remarkable about her appearance

apart from the fact that she was about fifty or so. Other than that, she was completely plain without a single distinguishing mark.

Almost hauntingly plain to be honest. It disturbed me that she didn't seem to have a single shred of warmth, but then again, this was someone that I assumed was a high-level person within EHS.

"Esther, you remember my CHO, Kevin, right?" said Paulina, offering a polite greeting but before Esther could so much as say a word, I jumped down her throat.

"Do you have any idea what the word 'no' means?" I growled at both newcomers. "Let me give you a hint—it means that whatever plan or offer or scheme that you have that involves Goblin Girl Maid Service is not going to happen. We don't want any affiliation with EHS whatsoever. Now do I need to spell that out for you with crayons and bright lights? What's it going to take before you leave us alone?"

I gave in and let my righteous fury be truly on display. I could tell that neither Esther nor the fairy woman were truly expecting such a vicious response right from the start. Especially the fairy woman, who looked like she was ready to pass a kidney stone judging by the look on her face.

"Nice to see you again too, Kevin," said Esther, her words dripping with sass. "I suppose that professional courtesy has truly gone out the window."

"Any professional courtesy we had for you disappeared when you started to harass Paulina," I retorted. "Now I'm going to treat you as no more than a bug that refuses to fly away. If that means you get squashed in the process, so be it."

Esther let out a very thin smile. She turned to look at Paulina. "I like him. He's a lot more memorable now than he was months ago."

"Say whatever it is that you came here to say and then just leave," said an exasperated Paulina. "You're interrupting us after hours, and I share Kevin's comments about professional courtesy."

"Very well, we'll make this short," said Esther. "As you no doubt already know, Extravagant Home Services is currently in acquisition mode. We're looking for other maid services in the city to join our growing team."

“The answer is no,” I said, interrupting her. “We’re not for sale.”

“Everyone is for sale at the right price,” said the fairy. “We just need to find out what it is.”

I snorted. “You only want to buy us because our maids kick your asses on a daily basis.”

“This isn’t about the strength of your maids versus ours,” said Esther.

“Oh really? Because I find it curious that we only heard from EHS after you’ve bought up every other maid service in the city,” I said.

“We’re no longer interested in bottom-feeders,” said the fairy. “We want the best of the best now.”

“Why now?” asked Paulina.

“What my associate Veronika is trying to say is that we’ve spent a lot of time and effort consolidating the maid market in Dragonmont City,” said Esther. “And we’ve accumulated a vast force, but the problem we have now is one of quality, not quantity.”

“Which is a nice way of saying you bought up all the shit maids,” I said. “And your ratings prove it.”

Esther scowled at me. “Our maids have room for improvement, and what better way for them to get it than by being trained by the maid service with the best reviews in the city?”

“And the one that was recently rated as A++?” added Veronika.

“You’re dreaming,” I said. “Besides, we’re not for sale.”

“You will be for sale one way or another,” snapped Esther.

“Why are you making this personal, Esther?” asked Paulina. “We’ve given you our answer but you keep pushing. What is your problem?”

Veronika rolled her eyes. “You made this personal when you stole the high-profile mayor bid right out from under us. We’re simply responding to your provocations.”

“We won that bid fair and square,” I said. “Don’t blame us because you’re still salty about it.”

“Paulina, you really need to consider what they’re offering,” said Esther, changing her tone to a softer one. “You know my company was bought out. I had no intention of selling either, but the offer was too great to ignore. You ought to just listen to what we’re offering.”

“And in the process, how many of your maids lost their jobs?” asked Paulina. “While you got a cushy new role in EHS? You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Your employees trusted you with their livelihoods, and you let them down by cashing out.”

Esther glared at her. “I made the best decision I had available. My maids will find new jobs, just like I did.”

“We were *so* worried about that part,” I said, gesturing for the door. “Your five minutes of grace is over. Time for you to leave.”

“Not without giving you our offer,” said Veronika, forcing a sheet of paper into my hands. “That right there is an approved offer from EHS to purchase Goblin Girl Maid Service outright. We’ve had our people do an appraisal of your business, and I think the offer is more than what you’re worth. I highly recommend you look at it, and when you decide that you can’t pass up the offer, call the number at the bottom of the sheet to begin the process.”

I was ready to crumble up the paper without even looking at it, but Paulina snatched it out of my hands right before pointing to the door. “You said your piece. Now leave.”

Veronika acted like she couldn’t leave fast enough. It was like it was despoiling her spirit to be in our duplex for one second longer than necessary, but Esther hung back. I expected more hostility or verve from her, but instead I saw a more mellowed tone.

“Money talks more than anything else, Paulina,” said Esther. “I don’t think you’re going to be upset by that offer. Trust me when I say this—do the smart thing now. Just accept the inevitable and let EHS buy you. It’s going to save all of us a lot of time in the end. If there’s one thing I’ve learned, it’s that EHS usually gets their way.”

“EHS hasn’t contended with the likes of us yet,” I said, putting my arm around Paulina. “And we’re not going to stand by while you try to devour

a business that we've put so much love into."

Esther could only shake her head at us, causing her beard to shake with her. "You two don't get it yet. Maybe one day you will though."

With that she closed the door, leaving us alone once more.

I could still feel the adrenaline of the meeting coursing through my veins. I was appalled by their lack of tact and their arrogance, but now I was getting the feeling that even a little hostility wouldn't make them go away.

"Holy crap," I heard Paulina mutter.

I turned to face her to see that she was reading the offer in front of her. She gave me a shocked expression when she was done. "They want to give us a million opals for the business."

"Really?" I asked, gesturing for the paper. "Let me see that."

Sure enough, the offer was right there in front of me. A million opals to purchase us outright, including all of our assets, which mostly meant our downtown office space. For the offer, EHS would retain Paulina and Kennedi as maids, but the rest of the company would be let go.

"Esther has known Kennedi and me the longest," said Paulina. "She knows what kind of work we do. The others not so much, so they won't take a risk on it."

"Yeah, but have you looked at the wages they're offering you both?" I said, tapping at it on the paper. "You might as well be working for peanuts."

"Something tells me Esther had a lot of influence in this," said Paulina. "Still, I bet it's a better offer than the other companies received. Probably better by far."

"It doesn't make a shred of difference though," I said, taking the letter and crumpling into a ball. "We're not for sale."

"They looked pretty determined about this though, Kevin," said an anxious Paulina. "What are they going to do now that we've rejected the offer?"

"It doesn't matter," I said. "They can't offer us what the company is truly worth. Not with this collection of talent under one roof. They can't afford

Goblin Girl Maid Service, no matter what they say. And if they need that spelled out for them when they check on this offer, I'll be glad to do so."

I felt Paulina crush into my side, hugging me tightly. "This whole thing makes me so nervous. I spoke with Yvette from Yvette's Maids 'n More, not long after they were purchased. She told me how aggressive EHS can be when they want something."

"Define aggressive," I said.

Paulina shrugged. "She wouldn't say much about it. I think she was still scared of them. But I got the impression that this could get very dirty."

"Bring it on," I said., crossing my arms. "Because I'm not going to let a bunch of hacks soil what we've worked so hard to build. No way, no how."

Paulina looked satisfied with that answer, but she closed her eyes as she hugged my chest. The only question that I had left was just what was it going to take to make EHS go away permanently?

Before this all turned as ugly as bearded dwarf ladies?

Chapter Eight

We didn't even get the benefit of twenty-four hours to review the offer that EHS made.

No sooner had we arrived at the office the next morning than Misty was at Paulina's door, claiming Esther was on the other line.

"Already?" said a frazzled Paulina. "It's barely eight-thirty!"

"It's the second time she's called today," said Misty. "The first message happened right at eight o'clock."

"Tell her that she received her answer last night," I said firmly. "And to stop calling us."

Misty nodded and left, leaving us alone in the office. Paulina put her head down on the table. At first, I thought it might have been because of the entire EHS situation, but when she rested her hand on her stomach, I realized what else it could be.

"Paulina, are you okay?" I asked, kneeling beside her.

"I'm so nauseous," she said. "First it's the baby and then hearing from Esther so quickly has me feeling like I could puke."

I put my hand on her lower back and rubbed it softly. "Everything will be okay. I'll grab you a basket if you feel it come up suddenly."

Paulina never ended up puking in the office, but I did notice her run to the bathroom at one point an hour later. At least she looked less stressed when she came out, but I was anxious to put EHS behind us to lessen the amount of things on her plate.

Unfortunately, that wasn't going to be the case.

On the next day, a courier arrived with a sealed letter from EHS. It was deposited onto Paulina's desk, where she treated it like it was a bomb that was about to go off.

"What do you think it is?" she asked me, studying it from every angle.

“It’s probably not a love letter if I had to guess. It’s not very thin, so I’m guessing it’s another offer.”

Not wanting to leave the suspense any longer, I grabbed it and ripped the top off the envelope. When I pulled the paper out, I wasn’t surprised by what was inside.

“Apparently we didn’t have their best offer yesterday,” I said, shaking my head in disgust as I handed it over to Paulina. “Now we’re worth one and a quarter million.”

“Really?” she said, taking it and reading it over carefully. “They really did up the amount. But they didn’t change any of the other terms.”

“They really think they can buy us,” I said. “They’re missing the whole point of what GGMS is all about.”

Paulina crumbled the letter and tossed it in the trash. “Care to take bets on how long it will be until they make a new offer?”

I snorted. “They can offer us ten million and it still wouldn’t be enough. But I’m willing to bet we will hear from them by the end of the day.”

“Probably by the end of the hour,” joked Paulina.

Sure enough, Paulina was closer to being right than I was. EHS called again right before lunch, except this time it was Veronika on the other end of the line. Instead of sending it through to Paulina, I had Misty send it over to me.

“We’re not for sale, Veronika,” I said loudly into the phone. “You could send a hundred offers and it’s not going to change a thing.”

“What will make it change then?” asked the neutral fairy. “Two million? Two and a half million?”

“It might as well be a hundred million!” I yelled.

I didn’t wait for her to give a response before I hung up. I was starting to feel Paulina’s frustration with these vultures, and I knew this was part of their strategy. No doubt EHS tried to wear down its victims in this way, but I was determined that we wouldn’t be one of them.

Near the end of the day, I was finally faced with a problem that wasn't about EHS. This one was about an earlier promise I'd made, and it came to fruition when Kennedi stopped into my office carrying a laptop.

"So what are the odds that Blossom has left the real estate company?" she asked, setting the computer down on my desk. "Not just left, but it appears that she's retired?"

"You're kidding," I said.

"I wish," she replied. "Look at the website for the real estate company. She's not listed as one of the agents any longer. I even called them up to double check, and they told me she retired a month ago. Our property was one of the last ones she sold."

"I don't suppose they were willing to give you her home address?"

Kennedi shook her head. "No, they wouldn't, but I don't need it anyway. I found a listing for an apartment on the other side of the city. I was hoping to call her first, but I'm not opposed to stopping by her place if I need to."

I lifted my head. "Do you want company?"

There must have been a tired look on my face at that moment because Kennedi laughed and patted my shoulder.

"I think I can handle this one," she said. "I know you have a lot going on right now. I'll go check it out and tell you what I find."

I was only too happy to let that one go, but I didn't want her to feel like I didn't care about it.

"If you need help, please come find me," I said.

Kennedi kissed my cheek. "The only help I'm going to need is finding a willing audience to watch my lap-dance show later. Know anyone that's interested?"

I was just about to open my mouth to accept that offer when a notice popped up on my computer. It was an invitation reminder for the meet-and-greet with the Cursed Coven.

And it started in the next hour.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck,” I swore suddenly. How could I have forgotten all about this?

Kennedi giggled. “Fucking is what I had in mind, yes. But I was going to start with dancing.”

“I can’t tonight,” I said. “I forgot about this date that I had planned with Cassidy tonight. We’re going to meet the Cursed Coven witching team.”

“Is that why Cassidy left here half an hour ago? She was so happy that she was singing as she left.”

That definitely seemed accurate. When I mentioned to Cassidy that I wanted to take her on a unique date to see the Coven, she’d been over the moon about it. The problem was that I told her right after we got back to the city, and I hadn’t thought about it since all this EHS business erupted in my face.

I winced. “I can’t believe I forgot about her. If I rush, I can get home and get changed soon enough to be ready for the date.”

“But what exactly are you going to offer me in exchange for keeping my mouth shut about you forgetting, hmm?”

Kennedi extended her palm toward me and fluttered her eyelashes.

“Um, I’ll give you more orgasms than you can stand the next time we get to have sex?” I said, throwing out the best offer I could make her. Usually starting with sex with Kennedi was the right idea.

She raised her hand and showed off all fingers. “Five orgasms, mister! And not one less! You owe me!”

“I’ll make it six!” I said, grabbing my things and rushing out the door. The last thing I saw was Kennedi letting out a fist-pump in excitement.

I don’t think I ever made it home as quickly as I did that night. I could have ridden a dragon and probably still not have gotten back as fast. When I showed up at Cassidy’s door, I could see the centaur girl had on this beautiful blouse that was dark green in color, with buttons going down the front. She was wearing an off-white skirt as well, covering up her front legs while the rest of her body was uncovered. Her tail swished in excitement as soon as she saw me.

“I so can’t wait for our date tonight!” she said, before taking one look at my clothes. “You haven’t changed yet?”

“Running late from the office,” I said. “Just let me shower and get changed and I’ll be ready!”

Cassidy only smiled and nodded.

I took the world’s shortest shower, barely getting wet enough to give myself a solid scrub. I dried off hurriedly and dressed in a pair of jeans and a dark blazer that I knew Cassidy really liked. When I showed up outside her door fifteen minutes later, she looked no worse for wear.

“Come on, I don’t want to be late!” she said, grabbing my hand as we left the house.

The meet-and-greet for the Cursed Coven was being held at the Sanderson Auditorium which was only a short distance away. Along the way, we passed numerous shopping areas, many of which were just getting warmed up for this time of day as most of their customers got off work and started to shop. I figured we’d have time afterward to do a little shopping, so for now, we just went straight to the auditorium, where there was a modest line already formed outside.

And it was here that we saw so many die-hard Coven fans, many of which were dressed up in the gear of their favorite witches. The most notable of which was Wanda the Wicked, known as the leader of the Coven. She was unique in that her witches’ hat had two cones instead of the usual one. Just past the line, I could see a vendor selling replicas of the hats, and when I saw Cassidy gaze at it longingly, I made sure to purchase one for her.

“Oh Kevin, you’re the best,” said Cassidy, placing her hat on her head and modeling it for me. “How do I look? Like I could try out for the team next year?”

“You could put whatever hex you wanted on me, and I’d totally let you,” I said.

Cassidy giggled and fell against my side. “I’m so excited. This is going to be so much fun. I even brought something so they could autograph it for us!”

She pulled out a pamphlet from her purse, which I recognized as being the one that we all received during the Enchanted Festival, when they took on the Bakerstown Brooms. On it was a stylized picture of Wanda, and at that moment, I made it my mission to make sure Cassidy got as many autographs as she could.

Right before we were admitted into the auditorium, I counted about fifty people in line.

“I’m surprised there aren’t more people here,” I told Cassidy. “Hardly more than fifty right now.”

Cassidy nodded. “The Coven are such a new team still that they don’t have a dedicated fan base. If it were a Bakerstown meet-and-greet, the line would have probably wrapped around the block. We would have been lucky just to get any tickets whatsoever.”

“It’s okay it’s the Coven though, right?” I asked. “You’re not disappointed it’s not one of the more well-known teams?”

Cassidy waved her hand dismissively. “Are you crazy? I *love* the Coven. This is the best one that we could have gone to, trust me. I’m over the moon about this!”

I guess she didn’t think I was convinced because she peppered my cheek with kisses right after.

“Have you ever done anything like this before?” I asked. “For any of the other teams?”

She shook her head. “Never, but I’ve always wanted to do it. My parents were never fans of the sport so I didn’t go to my first one until I was already a teenager. My sister loves it, and she and I went to many arena games. My very first game I got to watch the Vickers Vexes take on the Newbury Noses, and I’ve been hooked ever since.”

“They really do come up with some creative names, don’t they?” I asked, wondering how they thought it was a good idea to call a team the Noses.

“They take the witch motif to the limit,” explained Cassidy. “It’s actually kinda cool seeing what they come up with. Especially as the sport grows

more popular. Would you believe that when my parents were little, they didn't have such a thing as Witch Showdowns?"

"What did they do for fun?" I asked.

She gave me a strange look. "They used to blindfold trolls and make them chase after each other with their own clubs. Like a dumb version of whack-a-mole."

"Witch Showdowns definitely sound a lot more interesting than that," I joked. "Actually, that sounds kinda lame."

"Don't I know it. And it definitely was from what I heard. Oh look, the line is moving!"

Sure enough, we started to inch forward into the auditorium. We were near the back of the line, so it took a few moments until we could get to the front, where I read our names off to the attendant to confirm our reservation.

"Okay, you two are in," he said, pounding his clipboard like his life depended on it. "Keep the line moving."

"Oh my goodness, this is so exciting!" said Cassidy, holding her hands together as we entered the auditorium. The space inside was partitioned into a small section for just the fans of the Coven. All six members of the witching team were present, and each of them was sitting at their own table surrounded by posters, books, signed pictures, and much more.

It wasn't hard to see who the big star of the Coven was, as most of the people were gathering around Wanda's table hoping to get something signed. There was a modest sprinkling at the other tables too, but Wanda seemed to be the one that was getting the most attention.

There was an aura in the atmosphere, a buzzing that just seemed to grip us from the moment that we walked in. I suspected part of that was Cassidy's excitement as we rushed to the first table that was relatively free, which belonged to one of the defensive members of the team, Crazy Carla.

"Hiya, dears!" said Carla, her accent on display as she tipped her hat at us. "Thank you for coming out tonight!"

“Either that’s Crazy Carla or I’m dreaming!” said Cassidy, her tail swishing around like crazy. She leaned into me. “Pinch me please?”

I chuckled. “You’re not dreaming so I’m definitely not pinching you.”

“I’ll pinch you alright,” offered Carla. “It might hurt a little, but I could always heal you with my signature spell.”

“Oh! You mean Body Aid!” gushed Cassidy.

Carla grinned. “I see you’re quite the fan. How about I sign something for you? Do you like posters?”

By the time we were done with Carla, we had a large poster of the entire Coven, along with Carla’s signature across the bottom. Cassidy held it against her chest like she never wanted to be parted with it again.

“Do you think we can get all of them to sign it?” she asked. “That would be so cool! I’d hang it in my room if that was the case. Do you have any idea what it would be worth someday?”

“Hopefully a lot?” I said, having no idea what kind of value was attached to witching team memorabilia. I suspected it wasn’t quite as much as what the Beatles could fetch.

“Look! The line for Fernanda the Furious isn’t that long!” said Cassidy, pulling me to the next table.

For the next thirty minutes, we continued to make our rounds to all the members of the Coven. We hit Fernanda the Furious and Two-Strike Tilla, followed by Grumpy Glenda, only to round out the rest of the members with the oldest member of the Coven, a wrinkled green-faced witch by the name Jasperia the Bold. By that time, the line for Wanda had dwindled significantly, which allowed us the chance we’d been waiting for.

“Well, it looks like we have a pair of super fans here!” joked Wanda when we approached her table. She planted her hands on her hips, looking every bit the leader of the Cursed Coven.

And she was pretty too. Most witches had the reputation of being ugly, but Wanda was anything but. I think it was the pose of confidence that really made her attractive, but either way Wanda stood there in front of us like a queen surveying her kingdom. She had long, green-colored hair that was

smooth, wavy, and glimmered in the light. Her wardrobe definitely showed a lot more skin than the other women, missing pieces at the shoulders, elbows and across her torso. Her cleavage was on display, which was very generous in itself, and she was holding her staff right between them (which only seemed to emphasize their size).

Finally facing her favorite witch, Cassidy became so excited that she started to shake. “It’s really you! It’s Wanda the Wicked!”

“Last time, I checked,” said Wanda, grinning at us with her signature smile. “You two are big fans of the Coven, I take it?”

“Big fans,” I said, leaving it at just that. “Especially Cassidy. We saw you upset the Bakerstown squad a few months back. That was a fantastic match.”

Wanda turned to face Cassidy. “What’s your favorite spell of mine, hon? I’ll give you a real treat right now if you tell me.”

“Definitely the Nightshade spell!” said Cassidy. “It’s so powerful, and no one seems to know how to handle it when they face you.”

“Darling, you have incredible taste. And let’s hope they never find out,” said Wanda. She then pounded the ground with her staff twice. “*Loris Muhala*!”

Suddenly, a dark cloud sprung forth from the top of Wanda’s staff. It continued to grow, inflating itself until it was nearly as large as I was until Wanda stopped it with another stomp of her staff.

“Can’t let it get too big,” she said, winking at me. “I have to save that for the other witching teams. I don’t want my fans getting sucked up in that vortex.”

“Wow, that’s so cool!” said Cassidy. “What happens if I touch it?”

“Your skin peels off one strip at a time until you die horribly,” said a deadpan Wanda. She then smiled. “It’s fucking radical, isn’t it?”

Wanda tapped the ground again, muttering another spell under her breath until the Nightshade spell wrapped around our bodies. It started to glow with hundreds of different colors under the thick cloud until it finally dissipated in the air around us.

“You know I learned that spell from my grandmother?” said Wanda. “She was one of the baddest witches of all time. Back then, witches didn’t do showdowns or anything. Instead, they lived in quiet communities just outside the city. It wasn’t until the showdowns became a thing that they became popular. My grandma used that spell to keep crows out of her garden, but it works so much better when facing off against other witches.” Wanda then leaned in closer to Cassidy. “Plus the fans love it.”

Listening to Wanda talk was like listening to a famous artist describe their works. It wasn’t hard to see how passionate she was about her spells, as well as the image she kept for the fans.

“When it comes to magic, I’m determined to be one of the greats,” said Wanda, touching her chest with her hand. “I want to redefine the field of magic. I want textbooks a hundred years from now teaching about Wanda the Wicked. I want nothing more than to have my name associated with it for all time, showing the best of the best.”

“You have so much ambition,” said Cassidy, still awestruck. “How did you become so confident in life? I have a cozy life, really I do, but there are days when I feel like I can’t handle it all. How do you do it? How do you push past that?”

Wanda smirked and planted her hand on her hip. “We all have those feelings, darlings. I just choose to ignore them and push them back where they came from. You have to remember how much you’re worth.” Wanda’s eyes then flickered to me. “And it also helps to have a few people close to you that can remind you how awesome you are when you’re feeling down.”

I think it was Wanda’s intention to be my wing-woman at that point, and she didn’t disappoint. I felt Cassidy’s body crush against my side, knowing that I was one of those few chosen people in her life.

“I think I have that last part covered,” said Cassidy, looking at me with stars in her eyes.

“Someone’s getting lucky tonight,” said Wanda, laughing at her own joke before grabbing a pair of shades and putting them on her face. “You two have anything for me to sign? Let’s see it!”

A minute later, Cassidy had Wanda’s proud signature on her poster—the sixth and final signature she needed to complete the poster. The meet-and-greet was starting to wind down at that point, now that most people had met the witch they wanted to meet the most. We were all gathered into seats for the next portion of it, where the manager of the team talked about their successes this year and let the crowd have a chance to ask final questions of the Coven before the event was finally over.

I think Cassidy wouldn’t have minded if we skipped that last part. The entire time we were listening to the manager talk, I could feel the weight of her gaze on me. When I turned to look at her, she was giving me this deep look that said a million different things.

“Are you okay?” I whispered to her.

Cassidy nodded quickly as a dreamy smile appeared on her face. “Best date ever.”

Chapter Nine

"Can you believe how amazingly cool that was?"

Cassidy was still gushing about the meet-and-greet as we walked home a short while later. She was also sporting a new t-shirt, this one purchased from Wanda's stall before we left. It had the spell for the Nightshade curse written across the front, *Loris Muhala*, in fancy script.

"Do you think if I practiced it like a million times I could get the Nightshade spell to work for me?" asked Cassidy as we walked.

"I wish it were that easy," I said. "From what Wanda was saying, you have to go through a ritual ceremony where you become a bride of the occult in order to use dark magic. Without that ceremony, the spells don't mean anything to us."

"Let's try it regardless," said Cassidy. "*Loris Mohula*!"

I had to work hard to restrain my laughter. "I think it's *Loris Muhala*, babe."

"Oops," said Cassidy. "Oh well, I'll keep working on it!"

The night couldn't have gone any better. We stopped to get ice cream as we walked home, each of us getting a cone while we walked along the deserted streets of the city. The only way I could have made this night better was if I had Cassidy's bed waiting for her when we arrived, but I was still a few days out from delivery.

Not that I thought it mattered at that point. The only place that Cassidy wanted to look right now was in my eyes.

"Can I ask you something?" she said, when we were not far from the house. "How do you know when you're in love?"

I nearly choked on my ice cream. "What do you mean?" I asked, trying to stall for time.

"I mean there's a difference between loving someone and being in love with someone," she said. "I love everyone in the house for example, but

how do you know when you're in love with someone? I've never truly been in love with someone before."

I knew where this conversation was going, which was also why I didn't want to screw up the answer.

"When you look at this person, do you hear singing in your head?" I said, being playful with it.

Cassidy gave me a coy look as she searched my face. "Yeah, sometimes."

"More seriously, I don't know how you would describe it. You just feel it. You just know it, like one day you wake up and it hits you. Or you're doing something else when you just make the connection. Impossible to describe, but when you know, you know."

Cassidy turned her head down to watch the street. She didn't say anything for several moments, and I could tell she was processing what I had to say.

It also gave me time to sift through my own feelings about her. I loved every girl in the house, was *in* love with every girl. They were all different in their own ways, but each one of them had somehow wormed their way into my heart.

And most had wormed their way into my bed. All except Cassidy, though I had the suspicion that this was going to change tonight.

It was a few seconds later that Cassidy finally lifted her head and looked at me. "I think I'm in love. No, I *know* I'm in love. I knew I loved you before because of who you are, but I can honestly tell you that I'm in love, Kevin. And it's with you."

"So I guess the Coven idea was a good one then?" I teased, earning a swat from Cassidy.

"Oh, it was definitely different from what we've done before," she said. "But different in an amazing way. It's funny, you know? I've felt like I've been waiting my entire life to feel this way. Now that I do, I wonder what I've been waiting for? I don't feel any different than my normal self, but something is different. It's my heart, and it's full of love for you."

I grabbed her hand, bringing it up to my lips and kissing the back of it. "You know you're not alone, right? I love you too, Cass. It's hard not to

love you, but I think I started that first day we met in the park."

"That was a wonderful day, wasn't it?" she said, sighing happily. "If only I knew beforehand that I was going to be meeting people that were going to be so important to my life, I might have done something differently."

"I wouldn't have wanted you to do something differently anyway," I said. "You made the best first impression."

Cassidy raised an eyebrow. "I might have tried harder. Not made as many mistakes."

"But that's not something you can really control. You are who you are, Cass. And everyone has a learning curve with a new job. And look how far you've come now."

"It's silly in a way," she said. "It doesn't even feel like it's a real job. It just feels like a family more than anything. More than my own ever felt like, that's for sure."

"I can tell you the feeling is mutual for all of us," I said, finishing my cone a few seconds later. "What do you want to do now? Get a late meal? Go walk along the water? What's on your mind?"

The look that Cassidy gave me next was full of heat.

"Actually, I was hoping we could go back to the house," she said, her voice a little anxious. "And spend some private time with just the two of us?"

"For that, I'd give the world," I said.

Cassidy giggled nervously, but I swore that she started walking faster. Soon it was like she was dragging me back to the house, not that I minded at all.

I was excited too. Excited by the prospect of what was to come. I was nervous as well, mostly because I still didn't know how this was going to go. I knew the basic mechanics of the whole thing, but I'd never had sex with a centaur before.

I guess there's a first time for everything though.

I didn't expect to find the house empty when we arrived. No one was in the living room, and several of the bedroom lights were already turned off. I

thought that it seemed fishy, but when I heard sounds of gaming coming from Kennedi's room, I figured not everyone had gone to bed just yet.

By the time we arrived at Cassidy's room, she shut the door behind me and locked it. The sound of the lock sliding into place seemed to echo throughout the room, and I could tell that it made her blush with the realization of what we were about to do.

In true Cassidy fashion, she started it off in a very clinical and prepared way.

"So I've been reading up about this," she said, as her fingers fiddled with the bottom of her blouse. "And from what I've read, sexual intercourse between centaurs and humans isn't that hard."

I had to resist the urge to laugh. The last thing I wanted was to have this boiled down to something that sounded like it came from a sterile textbook.

"Please don't call it intercourse ever again," I said, shaking my head. "It just doesn't set the mood. At all."

Cassidy covered her mouth in embarrassment. "I'm sorry. I just wanted to be prepared and to know what to expect so I read all the material I could find. Did you know there's a wonderful manual that talks about all the magical creatures of Dragonmont City and all the different ways they can have sex together?"

"So kinda like a fantasy Kama Sutra?" I asked.

Cassidy pursed her lips. "What's the Kama Sutra?"

"Ask Kennedi sometime. I'm sure she probably has a copy or two laying around here somewhere."

She stuck her finger in the air. "Noted, I'll get with her when we're done!"

I laughed as I shook my head. "I'm really happy that you've thought enough about this to research it; but, I just want to do what feels natural. I don't want you to overthink this at all, okay? Let's just focus on enjoying each other and feeling good, and we'll see where the night takes us."

"That sounds wonderful," said Cassidy, pushing into my arms and squeezing me tight. "I have one more surprise for you though, if that's

okay?”

She didn’t wait for my response as she moved across the room to her closet, where she grabbed several large body pillows and tossed them into the pile of blankets that she usually called her bed.

“I did read that it helps to have lots of pillows,” she said. “To make everyone comfortable!”

“Do you know what would make me really comfortable right now?” I asked. “If you came over here and kissed me.”

Cassidy let out a deep breath. She moved closer to me, with slow but deliberate steps. When she finally wrapped her arms around me, I brought her face close to mine and kissed her.

“Mmm, kiss me again,” she whispered once the kiss broke.

“My pleasure,” I said.

Holding Cassidy’s cheek with my hand, I let my lips get reacquainted with hers. Kissing Cassidy was an experience that was completely different from the other girls. I knew Kennedi and Bridgette could make me cum just from kissing alone, but Cassidy was a different subject. Her lips weren’t as experienced. She turned in awkward ways, but what made it so amazing was the fact that we were exploring all of this together.

This was going to be her first time, and I wanted to make sure it was as special as it could be.

The heat in our kisses grew deeper. I slid my tongue into her mouth, enjoying the taste of her and the way her tongue met mine. She kept hers back, only moving it forward to lightly caress mine as she tried to figure out the best way to make out.

After a few moments, we’d figured out the winning formula, and I could feel Cassidy pressing harder against my body as we continued to lock lips.

I knew she had to feel my cock through my jeans. I was getting harder, and a tent was no doubt poking against her pleated skirt.

When I broke the kiss next, there was a glazed-over look in her eyes. I could tell she wanted me to take charge, so my fingers found the buttons on her blouse. Starting from the bottom, I undid them one at a time.

I pulled Cassidy's blouse open, showcasing a taut stomach and two snug breasts resting easy in a dark-colored bra. She was watching me intently, no doubt to see which direction I took this. It was an easy decision for me—I wanted to see her topless. I reached behind her back and undid the clasp, hearing Cassidy suck in her breath at that exact moment.

"It's okay," I said softly to her. "We're okay."

If it was a moment of hesitancy, it ended quickly. She nodded and extended her arms, allowing me to pull the bra from her torso.

It was my first sight of a topless Cassidy, and it was one I'd never forget. Her breasts barely moved even when the bra was released, being springy and perky enough that they didn't even need the support. Her nipples were already painfully stiff, no doubt in anticipation of what was coming. She didn't have the well-endowed chest of Kennedi or Paulina, but they were no less perfect either way.

I heard the smallest moan erupt from her mouth when my hands cupped her tits. They felt so perfect in my hands, as if I could hold onto them all day and never get tired of them. Using my thumbs, I brushed across her stiff nipples, feeling the nubs under the pad of my finger. Before long, I used two fingers to gently pinch them, which caused Cassidy to smile at me.

"Just a little bit harder," she said. "I like when I can feel the pressure on them."

I applied a little more pressure. "Like this?"

Another moan escaped her lips. "Oh yes. Oh wow. Right there."

Encouraged by her words, I applied just a little more pressure. This time, I watched Cassidy's knees buckle slightly as her eyes closed. The smile stayed on her face.

"My nipples are the most sensitive part of my body," she finally admitted. "Any time I want to feel good, I just . . . touch them."

"That's really sexy," I said. "I love them."

What Cassidy said next was truly thrilling to me. She tilted her head slightly.

“You know, I have other parts of me you haven’t seen yet,” she said. “If you want to, that is.”

Fuck, there was nothing hotter to me than listening to that statement. I wanted more—wanted to have Cassidy fully naked in front of me.

And right now, only her skirt stood in the way.

I allowed my hands to drop lower still, raking my fingers against her smooth stomach until I hit the top of that skirt. Cassidy decided to help me at that point, reaching around her back and unhooking her skirt.

“This might make it easier,” she said impishly. “Centaur skirts are just a little different than those for normal bi-peds.”

With her help, her skirt unraveled from her body, leaving her in just a tiny pair of pink panties. I swore the panties were darker around the spot just below her clit, but it could have been my imagination playing tricks on me. Either way, only one last flimsy barrier stood between me and my Cassidy.

Before I could remove her panties, Cassidy touched my arm. She was staring at the tent in my jeans, and I knew what she wanted before she even got the words out.

“Can I uh . . . see it?” she asked politely. “Please?”

Who was I to turn down a request asked so graciously?

I pulled my jeans down, working them over each hip until I was standing there in nothing but my briefs. Just the anticipation of what was to come had me about ready to burst out of my underwear, but when I hooked my thumbs over the band and yanked them down, I could have sworn I heard Cassidy hold her breath.

“Wow, that’s a penis!” she shouted as it bobbed back and forth.

If I wasn’t living in the moment, that comment would have been funny. I didn’t even know how to take it, and neither did Cassidy judging by the way she covered her mouth with her hand.

“I’m sorry, that was awkward,” she said finally, eyeing my member like it was something that was going to reach up and bite her.

“A little bit of awkwardness is okay right now,” I said.

Cassidy nodded and started to reach her hand out. Suddenly, she stopped. “Can I touch it?”

“Be all means. Please touch it.”

As soon as I gave her a little encouragement, Cassidy opened up. She didn’t hesitate in wrapping her and around my shaft, giving a squeeze with her hand. “Wow. Are they always so hard?”

“If only,” I joked. “But only when I’m turned on.”

I let Cassidy explore on her own terms, which she did for the next couple minutes. I tried to show her what I liked and how to touch me, and she seemed to be a remarkably quick learner for it being her first time.

In true Cassidy fashion, she came out with the real reason why that was when she finally let go of me.

“I watched some videos on the internet,” she admitted, giving me a shy look. “Did you know you can look up just about any kind of sex out there? There are millions of results!”

“You don’t know much about internet porn, do you?”

“Not really,” she said. “Is that just one website or a few?”

I chuckled. “It’s like half the internet depending on who you ask. Remind me to show you some results someday.”

The look of intrigue on her face at that moment was funny enough to capture on film. She looked so adorable that I couldn’t help but pull her back into my arms, kissing her again. Cassidy surrendered to my embrace, letting her lips mash against mine.

It was a different experience to feel her body against me, with those stiff nipples carving holes into my chest. This time, my cock was able to brush against the fabric of her panties—a subtle reminder that she still wasn’t all the way naked yet.

I decided I had to fix that. Her panties were clasped in the back just like her skirt was, and it only took a quick motion of the wrist to get them undone, pulling them away.

When I looked at her body again, I was amazed. Between her legs was a light patch of brown pubic hair. From there, Cassidy's skin started to darken to the chestnut fur of her lower legs, as well as the rest of her horse body.

Sure enough, all the rumors I'd heard about centaurs were true. I could see Cassidy's vagina between her front legs, in the same exact spot as I would expect to find any other woman's. Though there was that familiarity to it, the rest of her body meant that the mechanics of getting me inside her were going to be challenging.

And yet, I was up for the challenge. After a quick glance at the pillow situation, I had an idea.

I knew Cassidy still wanted me to lead her through her first time, so I leaned down to bunch a few of the pillows together, creating a small pile that I could use to prop me up while I laid on my back.

Cassidy was watching me closely the entire time, especially when my cock stood up straight in the air once I was down.

"Cassidy, I know you can get down on your front knees because I've seen it before," I said. "Step over me until I tell you to stop and then kneel for me."

She followed my lead, and my hope the entire time was that the physics of it all worked out. My biggest concern was that even her kneeling wouldn't bring her down low enough, but I decided I'd deal with that problem when I got there.

As Cassidy hovered over my body with hers, she bent her front legs and started to kneel while keeping her back legs ramrod straight. In doing so, she moved lower and lower still until the tip of my cock brushed against her sex.

It was like touching electricity to feel that intimate contact with her. I craved more, especially when I saw her get low enough that I knew sliding inside her wouldn't be any trouble. I just had to wait until we were perfectly lined up.

When it finally happened, it was almost too easy. My cock slipped into Cassidy's pussy as easily as if we'd been doing it all along.

“Ughn,” whimpered Cassidy once I was inside. “So that’s what it feels like.”

I’ll be honest—it wasn’t what I expected her to say. Cassidy bounced around on my cock for several moments as if she was trying on a new pair of shoes. It would have been funny if not for the moment.

And yet, I was still finding it hard not to let my eyes roll to the back of my head with pleasure. As easily as I slid inside, I couldn’t help but notice various changes in pressure along my entire shaft. It was tightest right near the tip, loosening up some just below the head before coming in hard around the base. It was like Cassidy’s pussy was tied in directly with her heart, because I could feel a pulse ripple against my cock, even when we were holding still.

It was the craziest, but also one of the hottest moments of my life. And to share it with the lovely Cassidy was only the cherry on top.

From that point onward, we didn’t need to figure out anything else. Instinct took over—well enough instinct to guide us through centaur-on-human sex. It wasn’t that easy for Cassidy to bounce, but I was able to put my hands around her back, using it as leverage to thrust into her.

Our rhythm built quickly, and it hit with more passion than I expected. The best part of all of it was watching Cassidy’s breasts ripple as I pumped her—that slight jiggle driving me crazy with lust.

Better yet was watching her face. To see her losing her virginity with me, when we’d waited so long to make this moment happen, was nothing short of amazing. It was also seeing Cassidy let go, especially when I knew it was because she’d given me her heart, trusting that I wouldn’t hurt her.

And I wasn’t about to abuse that trust either. Not when I cared for her as much as I did.

“Oh yeah, yeah . . . ahh . . . oh, Kevin . . . mhm,” she whimpered, all the way I continued to thrust into her. She wasn’t much for talking during sex, apart from those little moans and mutterings of my name.

Words couldn’t describe how good she felt. I was having trouble forming anything more complicated than a groan too, especially when Cassidy came for me a few minutes into sex.

The adorable centaur became as quiet as a mouse when she came, but internally, I felt the eruption as every part of her pussy clamped down on my shaft. That intense pressure against the tip and the base was taken to new heights, feeling so good that I almost came right then.

As if she couldn't get any more adorable, Cassidy hiccuped before it was all over, just like she was a drunken sailor. She realized exactly what she did too, because her hand clapped over her mouth as her eyes widened in shock.

"I'm so not drunk," she said, making me laugh hard enough that she started to laugh with me.

I'd been in moments before where something like this could've taken the tension out of sex. Suddenly, all the eroticism was gone, and it was hard to recapture that mood. That wasn't the case with Cassidy right now. If anything, it was really refreshing to be able to laugh with her.

"I'm pretty sure that laughter isn't part of sex," said Cassidy, still grinning as she recovered. "Or at least the book I read left that part out."

"Do me a favor," I said. "If you have any more questions about sex, come to me. And sometimes, a little laughter is needed just to get you to the next high."

I felt her body start to move again, subtle jerking motions that begged for me to resume my thrusting. I reached around to grab her back, holding her still while we had sex. When the time came that I couldn't hold back anymore, I pushed as far into her body as I could possibly go and I came hard.

As my body gave into the orgasmic high, I felt Cassidy's loving hands caressing my face. It was a light touch, a gentle one that was full of emotion. It was the perfect transition into a post-sex haze where we were both on cloud nine from the experience we had shared.

When I pulled out of her, Cassidy laid down on the blankets, putting her arm under her head and twisting so that she could face me. Her brown hair wrapped around her arm, and I'd never seen her look more beautiful than she did at that moment.

“I think I really like sex,” she said moments later, nodding her head like it was a conscious decision on her part. She then turned her head. “Enough to do it again! And maybe once more before bed. Is that too much sex?”

I propped my head up with my hand. “There are a lot of people who say there’s no such thing as too much sex.”

“Yes, I can see how they would say that,” said Cassidy, still looking like she was studying the subject intently.

The whole thing made me laugh. I pulled Cassidy close to me, and I felt her immediately nuzzle against my chest.

“I’d love for us to try it in a real bed though next time,” I said. “When your new bed arrives, we’re really going to have to break it in.”

Cassidy gave me a funny look. “What new bed?”

Suffice to say I only got out about two sentences before I felt her ringing my neck with a hug so tight, I almost choked.

“You really got one custom made just for me?” she shrieked with excitement.

“It was the right thing to do,” I said. “You’ve lived here long enough, and part of me dies every time I see you settle in for bed with only pillows and blankets on the ground.”

Cassidy waved her hand. “I told you, it’s not a big deal. I’m used to it.”

“Well, that time that we went to your old house and saw your bed, I knew it could be done,” I said. “And I want you to have that here. This is your home now, and I want you to be as comfortable as possible.”

She sighed happily. “This has been the best day in some time. First the Coven, then sex, then finding out you’re making me a bed. Are you trying to spoil me because you’re doing a really good job at it.”

“Only the best for my girls,” I said, kissing her cheek.

Cassidy was quiet for a moment until she fixed me with a wicked look in her eyes.

“Kevin, I think I’d like for us to have sex again right now,” she said. “Can you go again?”

For her, I was willing to attempt any challenge.

Chapter Ten

THE NEXT MORNING, Cassidy was already awake by the time I opened my eyes.

My gorgeous centaur girlfriend looked to be completely content to watch me sleep, holding her head up with both hands as her tail swished behind her.

“Good morning, sunshine!” she said brightly. “How did you sleep?”

“Poorly,” I said honestly. “But only because a certain centaur kept waking me up in the middle of the night to play hide the pickle.”

Cassidy nodded with excitement, but then a shocked look appeared on her face suddenly. “Oh! So *that’s* what hide the pickle means!”

I resisted the urge to hit her with a pillow. “Come on, beautiful. Let’s get some coffee. I’m going to need all the help I can get to make it through today without sleep.”

My first indication that something was up was after we took a few steps out of Cassidy’s room. The house was still too quiet—almost to the same degree as it was last night. It wasn’t until I stepped into the kitchen that I saw why that was.

All the other girls were sitting quietly around the table, but when they saw Cassidy and me, they broke out into large grins in what was quickly becoming a new tradition in the house.

“Happy Post-Sex Day!” shouted Kennedi, blowing a noisemaker that had come out of nowhere.

“How does it feel to be a real woman now?” asked Sadie, standing up and embracing Cassidy in a big hug.

Cassidy’s first inclination was to be embarrassed (as was my own), but that quickly disappeared when she realized that the group was more happy about her special night than anything else.

“He’s a stallion, isn’t he?” asked Kennedi, mimicking the sound of a horse directly after. “I loved my first time with him. He has such a loving touch.”

“It was definitely something . . . special,” said the more reserved Cassidy.

“And it’s about time you lost your virginity too,” added Nikki. “It was too much to have a virgin in the house all this time.”

“Why’s that?” asked Bridgette. “Does Malfiore hate virgins too?”

Nikki gave her a weird look. “No, I just had to constantly watch what I say around her. Malfiore doesn’t have anything against virgins.”

“It’s the first thing he doesn’t have something against,” muttered Bridgette.

“What was that, Bridge?” asked Nikki.

“Erm, nothing,” said Bridgette, turning her attention back to Cassidy. “We’re so proud of you. I’m so glad you had an amazing night.”

“I almost interrupted you both too,” said Kennedi. “Only because it sounded like so much fun. And you’ve given me a new position to try. I’m calling it the Centaur!”

With that statement, Kennedi bent her knees slightly and started moving up and down. It was enough to make Paulina smack her on the rear.

“You’re so ridiculous,” said Paulina.

“What?” said Kennedi, rubbing the spot on her ass where she was hit. “I’m thinking about submitting to have it added to the Kama Sutra.”

“Oh, speaking of that,” said Cassidy. “Do you think I could borrow yours for some light reading?”

“Read all you want, toots,” said Kennedi, cocking her finger like a gun before leaning against Paulina. “They grow up so fast. One day they’re virgins and the next they’re asking for the Kama Sutra. Kids these days.”

The rest of the morning was filled with merriment—more so than any day we’d seen since our Christmas holiday. I realized at that time how much stress the EHS situation had put on all of us, and frankly the last thing I wanted to do was go to the office to see how they were going to attempt to sway us again today.

But that was the very first thing waiting for me when I arrived that morning. I only had one message from Misty, and on it was a figure of

three million opals.

“You’ve got to be shitting me,” I groaned, looking at the sticky note and rolling my eyes.

“The lady who called me told me that you would probably say that,” said Misty, wincing in the process. “And she said that if you did, make sure you knew that she could offer three point five million next.”

“It never ends with those people,” I said. “If they’re made of money, why not just offer me everything in their bank account? Why do they keep doling out increased offers piecemeal?”

In hindsight, I knew exactly why they were doing it. They were trying to wear us down. I suspected that they thought we were just like all the other maid service companies they’d already purchased—eventually they would find a price where we could be bought.

They were going to be mistaken though. I wasn’t about to accept their dirty money if it meant bringing the dream that was Goblin Girl Maid Service to an end.

For that reason, I crumbled the note and tossed it in the trash before I made it to my office. I wasn’t going to let it soil my mood that day, and at least I didn’t receive any more offers before the end of the working day.

What I did receive that day was more unfortunate news. And it came from Kennedi.

“So about Blossom,” said the purple-haired goblin girl as she entered my office. “Would you believe she moved too?”

“After the luck we’ve been having lately, yes, I would believe that,” I said, putting my fingers in my eyes.

“I’ll keep looking for her, but her apartment was already rented out to another family,” said Kennedi. “And I can’t find any other listings for her.”

That was definitely a setback, but there wasn’t anything more I could do about it now. The Blossom issue had taken a backseat to the EHS problem, especially when the offers wouldn’t stop.

Every day over that next week, we received a new offer—each of them more lucrative than the last. By late Friday afternoon, we were up to ten million opals, prompting Paulina to sit down with me to discuss this last offer.

“Ten million opals is a lot of money,” said Paulina. “And it’s not so easily brushed aside. And now they’ve upped the hourly wages for me and Kennedi. They’re also allowing us to bring over two more girls now, but they don’t get the same wages that Kennedi and I get. The offers are getting better.”

“They’re still not good enough,” I said. “Even if they offered us all full-time jobs at the money we make right now, would it change your answer? If it meant that GGMS had to be dissolved?”

I saw a hardened look appear in her eyes. “No way.”

I shrugged. “Same here. There’s more at stake here than just jobs.”

“But we’re still no closer to making it stop though,” said Paulina. “The offers have been daily and sometimes more quicker than that.”

“They’re going to run out of money to throw at us soon enough,” I said. “I was joking about throwing a hundred million at us, mostly because no one would overpay that much for one company of about ten maids. We’re already at ten. My prediction is that they don’t have that much more they can offer us at this point.”

“I hope you’re right,” said Paulina, rubbing her arms. “I feel like I’m being held hostage in my own business. Every time I walk into my office and see I have a voicemail, I cringe. I just want it to end.”

“I’ll talk with Misty about not sending any more calls through,” I said. “We had a company voicemail set up for this very reason. Let’s start sending all their calls there.”

Paulina brightened considerably. “Yes, I think that would help a lot.”

I kissed her softly. “We’re going to be okay. Now how about we go home? Cassidy has been wearing me out this week, and I could surely use some time in the hot tub before I have to perform my duties again.”

She giggled. “Our favorite centaur girl has been wearing you out?”

“It’s gotten even more frequent since she got her bed,” I said, which was definitely true. Her bed was delivered earlier in the week, and Cassidy just flipped over it. The delivery guy was barely out of the door before she wanted to break it in.

At least it made the process of sex easier. We were actually able to lay together without a mass of pillows to prop us into awkward angles. My cock might still be sore from all the frequent sex, but at least it wasn’t my back anymore.

“She’s insatiable,” I said, touching my temple. “I can barely keep up with her, let alone the rest of the girls.”

Paulina gave me a playful pout as she spread her legs. “Can you make time for me? After lunch this afternoon, I was craving two things—some chocolate peanut butter ice cream, and my hunky CHO.”

I could tell by the empty bowl on her desk that she’d gotten one of those things already.

“For you, I’d never say no,” I said. “Hell, I’d never say no to any of my girls. Especially when it’s a pregnancy craving.”

She put her hands together and clapped. “Yay! Come on, let’s go home. Kennedi is waiting at the door for us.”

It was a weird situation to be in. I never expected to be the sole man needed to service a group of six women, but I was happy with my life. As exhausting as too much sex could be, you’d never hear me complain about it.

I was living proof of just how good life could be.

Unfortunately, our evening was tarnished before it even began. When the three of us made the turn to our street, I could see two figures already waiting for us at our front door.

None other than Veronika and Esther themselves, and they looked pissed to see us.

“We need to talk,” said Esther, crossing her arms once we marched toward the door.

“Don’t we have to hear from you two enough during the week?” I snapped. “Our home is sacred. Quit spoiling it with your foul presence.”

I’d hoped the biting remark would throw them off base, but if anything, it just made them angrier.

“I need to know why you still haven’t accepted any of our offers,” growled Veronika, pointing at my face with her finger while her wings flapped angrily. “I’m overpaying for what your business is worth, and yet here I find myself without a signed contract from you people. What is your deal?”

“Frankly, this is our problem,” I said, pointing at both of them in return. “There’s no offer that you can make us that would be enough.”

“Besides, our culture is so much different from yours,” added Paulina. “We actually value our people and the work that we do. It’s very clearly obvious that you don’t.”

“I value my people!” snapped Veronika. She then snapped her fingers at Esther. “Tell her, Esthus, about our employee perk program!”

Before Esther could say anything, I held up both hands. “Thank you for proving our point. And I’m sure *Esther* would love to tell us about the programs, but we’re not interested. Ever. Ever ever. Never ever ever. No way in seven hells are we going to ever accept being bought by you. So why don’t you spare us all the trouble and give us your very best offer now, because I’m not going to go through another week of you two harassing us once a day.”

Both women glared at me, but instead of addressing me directly, Esther glanced at Paulina and softened her tone. “Paulina, you know what the right thing to do is, don’t you? Nobody wants to be having this showdown on a Friday night.”

“So go home,” said Paulina, shrugging her shoulders. “I’m sure your cats are waiting for you anyway. All eleven of them.”

Kennedi snorted. “You just got served, bitch,” she said, laughing at Esther.

Esther pulled her beard in annoyance. She then whipped out one final offer from the inside of her doublet. “Last offer. Fifteen times what we offered

you the first time around. Fifteen million, plus the option to bring on four members of GGMS to EHS. Full salaries and everything. Look it over carefully."

I was extremely proud of Paulina when she took it out of Esther's hand and ripped it up without even looking at it.

"The business isn't for sale," growled Paulina.

Judging by the reactions on their faces, it was the worst thing she could have done. Both Esther and Veronika stormed past us, marching toward our gate. Once they were on the other side of it, Veronika turned and pointed to all of us.

"You're going to regret that! You're going to be so fucking sorry you rejected us!" she vowed.

The pair didn't say another word as they marched into the distance.

"Why do I feel like they just threw down the gauntlet?" muttered Kennedi once they were out of earshot.

"If they want to fight dirty, we'll be ready for them," said Paulina firmly.

Things were about to go from bad to worse.

Over the course of the next two weeks, EHS started to play *very* dirty.

The daily offers had finally stopped, only to be replaced by something much more insidious. It began when we started to get bullshit reviews on the forum that we couldn't trace back to any particular customer. Paulina brought it to my attention when the third one hit in the same week, having screenshots of all three as she put them on my desk.

"All three happened during this week," she explained. "And none of them look like current customers. Details are very light, and all of them say the same message using different words."

"And those words are that we suck apparently," I said, shaking my head. "Doesn't talk about our maids. Doesn't mention a bad experience with anyone in particular. No extra details. This is clearly a troll job."

“And no doubt it’s the work of EHS,” said Paulina.

“Can we dispute them?” I asked. “If they’re not valid, we should have a dispute process to get them removed?”

“I’ve already put in the requests,” she said. “But it’s going to take some time. And there’s no guarantee that they’ll be taken down.”

“We’ll do what we can,” I said. “But no matter how many bad reviews they give us, it still doesn’t change the fact that their reviews are so much worse.”

That might have been our saving grace for that day, but two days later we arrived at the office to find that someone had egged our front door, alongside the sign that hung on the wall outside. Misty was the one that had to clean it up while Paulina and I went scouring for the footage to see if we could identify the culprit.

“I bet it was Esther,” said Paulina, still angry as we rolled back the tapes to the overnight hours. “I could see her doing something like this and taking an immense amount of pleasure out of it.”

“If she was stupid enough to do that, then we’d have her on camera,” I said, still scanning. “Let’s hope they would sink that low.”

It wasn’t going to be that easy though. I was able to find the time that it occurred before the building was fully closed for the night. It showed a figure in black approaching our front door and then throwing several eggs at it before they fled. The problem was that I couldn’t easily tell who did it since they were covered in dark clothing and they were wearing a hood, hiding their identity.

“We can still get this over to the constables,” I said. “And we might get another clue who it will be if the building will let us see security tapes of the entrance at this time. They might have been smart enough to pull their hood up to do the crime, but let’s see if they kept it up when they walked out of the building too.”

Paulina let out a deep sigh and nodded her head. “I’ll get it sent over to the constables.”

Our string of bad luck didn’t end there. The next two weeks, we started to find that our customers were being poached away. I was looking at yet another bad review that had just appeared spontaneously when Paulina stepped into my office.

“We lost the Caltrax family,” she said, trying to keep a brave face on. “They’ve been given a better deal by EHS. I tried to show them how bad EHS was, but it was purely a decision about cost. And EHS offered them a deal they couldn’t walk away from.”

“Can we match it?” I asked, wincing after dealing with another poached customer earlier in the day.

“Not even close,” she said. “They might as well be working for free. We’d lose money if we matched that rate. A lot of money.”

“We might have to let them go then,” I said. “I can’t justify doing a job if it’s not making us any money.”

Paulina nodded, but I knew she was still troubled. I was troubled too, especially the next day when the mayor called me after receiving a new offer of his own.

“Kevin, this isn’t just an offer to do business,” he explained. “EHS offered me free service for the next month. They don’t even want a single opal.”

“How could they offer you that?” I said, shaking my head. “How could they afford to give you free service?”

“They’re trying to run you out of the city,” he said. “These types always follow the same plan of attack—they drop their prices until all their competitors are gone, and then they jack them up to cover the losses they suffered during that period. They want you gone, and they’re not above taking losses in the short term in order to make that happen.”

“So what are you going to do?” I asked, the hesitation already in my voice. “Are you going to take it?”

“No, I’m not,” he said. “You’ve always treated me more than fairly. Especially when it came to Cousin Thaddeus.”

I winced, remembering the first time we sent Sadie to his cousin’s house. She found the mayor’s cousin there doing his own stitches on his stomach,

which had been cut open during a fight. Sadie swore that she saw his intestines.

“Either way, I’m going to stick it out,” he said. “But you have a real problem on your hands. Is there any particular reason why EHS is picking a fight with you?”

“Yeah, they want to buy us, but we keep saying no,” I said. “So now it’s personal. Someone has also been bombing our reviews. They’ve egged our office too.”

“You better figure out how to end this before it gets any worse,” he advised. “I’ve seen battles like this before and they never end well. For either party.”

“What more can we do?” I asked. “I could put out some kind of promotional sale for the accounts they’ve stolen, but I can’t prove they’re behind the review bombs or the egging.”

“Trust me on this,” he said. “Find a good lawyer and they’ll be able to help. The only reason Cousin Thaddeus isn’t in jail right now is because we have a damn good lawyer. I can send over a recommendation if you like?”

“Sure, it couldn’t hurt,” I said. “Though I’d really prefer not to go the legal route if I don’t have to.”

“Kevin, I hate to say this, but you might not have a choice.”

The mayor was right. Things just kept getting worse. We lost Gina, our chef, the next day, after she put in her notice. When we asked her about it, she almost seemed scared to tell us.

“I’m so sorry, but I’ve been made an offer by EHS,” she said. “I’m going to cook at their corporate office. It’s really good wages, and I can’t exactly turn this down.”

“Would you give us the chance to match what they’re paying you?” asked Paulina. “You’ve done such a wonderful job here, and we’d hate to lose you.”

“Even Nikki has stopped complaining about your cooking, which is saying a lot,” I said. “Can we still make you a counteroffer?”

Gina winced. “I don’t know if you’ll be able to match this.”

Sure enough, we couldn’t. It was an outrageous price to pay for a chef, and it was clearly driven by spite. I had a feeling this was more about sticking it to us than paying Gina a fair wage. No doubt after we’d been driven out of business, Gina would probably be sacked. When I pointed this out, she said that she was going to make the best decision for her current circumstances.

Unfortunately, that involved leaving GGMS.

Misty left two days later, citing a similar offer. After that, our newer maids started to be poached. The twins, Sheri and Teri, were the next to go. They’d only been working solo jobs for a week before they were poached by EHS. Xena went next, followed by chatty Thora. We had to put out an immediate call for new maids, since it meant our current obligations, even with the losses, would be understaffed.

We were all reeling from the losses. After Christmas, the future at GGMS looked assured. Everything seemed to be following a divine plan of success, and I didn’t think there was anything at the time that could derail us.

But now everything kept falling apart. The last remaining girls all assured Paulina and me that they weren’t going to go to EHS. I believed them, since they all lived at the duplex with us and they knew what was at stake, but I was at a loss for what to do.

After Thora was poached away, I decided it was time to get some legal aid. There had to be something illegal about what EHS was doing to us, and I was determined to find out what it was.

If we didn’t, there was a real threat that Goblin Girl Maid Service could go under.

Just when I was about to call the number of Gary’s lawyer one afternoon, I was alerted to a new arrival to the office. Since Misty wasn’t available to work the door, we had Nikki and Kennedi switching off when one of them wasn’t working. In some cases, I even manned the reception desk since it was an all-hands-on-deck affair.

Today though, it was Kennedi that brought me the news.

“EHS is at the door,” she said somberly. “Esther and Veronika. And they have a thick file with them. I don’t think it’s another offer.”

“Let’s hope it’s a peace offering,” I grumbled. “Let me get Paulina.”

By the time all three of us appeared at the front, Veronika thrust the thick file into my hands.

“Now who’s just been served,” she said, crossing her arms as she smirked at us. “We’re suing you. Well, to put it more succinctly, EHS is suing GGMS.”

I gave her a confused face. “On what grounds? What the hell have we possibly done to you?”

“It’s simple really,” purred Veronika. “We’ve spoken with our legal team, and we’ve found that you’ve taken jobs without being rated by the city board. According to the city code, it’s illegal to operate a business and take customers without being rated.”

“We have a rating, Veronika,” said Kennedi. “We have an A++ rating. See it on the wall over there? You must have missed it when you had our place egged last week.”

Veronika lifted her chin. “I have no idea what you’re talking about. And I already know about the rating. It was only issued in the last month. And a good portion of your contracts are much older than that, so you were in violation of the law.”

I blew a raspberry. “Not like it matters. That’s a flimsy premise anyway. More than half the maid services in the city service their accounts without having a rating. Or at least they did before EHS bought them up. It’s a technicality more than anything else, and no judge is going to think it’s worth their time.”

“It doesn’t matter,” said Esther flatly. “It’s still the law. And it gives us enough grounds to sue you. We’re suing you for accounts that you stole from us because you were operating without a rating.”

“How much are you suing us for?” asked Paulina, looking into the file. Her eyes went wide suddenly. “Thirty million opals? Surely, you’re joking?”

“It’s double the amount of our last offering,” said Veronika smugly. “I told you that you’ll be sorry.”

I stepped closer to her. “So you want to fight this out in court? Fine, but you better bring your A-game, because when we get this stupid case dismissed, we’re coming after you for damages for everything you’ve done to us in the last two weeks. Absolutely everything, so I hope you’re ready to get rocked.”

Veronika scoffed. “Whatever. You’re aware that it actually costs money to fight these, aren’t you? And I’m guessing with how GGMS is bleeding revenue, you don’t have the money to fight a protracted legal battle. EHS has a nice war fund for just such an occasion though. So I don’t mind burying you if it puts you one step closer to going out of business.”

“Unless, of course, you’ll reconsider our last offer,” said Esther suddenly, which surprisingly earned her a glare from Veronika. “Then we can make this all go away.”

“Eat shit and die,” snapped Kennedi, tossing her purple hair over her shoulder. “That’s what you can do with your offer. We’re not going to be intimidated.”

“Suit yourselves,” said Veronika. “We’ll see you in court then.”

Both women turned, leaving us at the door to our office still angry and certainly flabbergasted. By the time they were gone, Paulina touched my arm.

“They might be vile, but they’re right about one thing,” said Paulina. “Our rainy day fund has taken a lot of damage lately. Even if their case is flimsy, I wouldn’t put it past them to find another one. Or another after that. We don’t have the money to keep fighting it.”

“Then we’re going to need to find an amazing lawyer,” I said. “Because I’ll be damned if this is the way we go out.”

Chapter Eleven

THE HUNT for a decent lawyer began that afternoon.

I didn't have much in the way of resources to know where to begin, apart from Gary's recommendation. When I called over to talk to that lawyer though, his receptionist let me know that he wasn't taking any new clients at the time, so that was kind of a dud.

Paulina had a great idea though, and it involved an old friend of ours.

"I know Mrs. Pennington has her fair share of contacts in the city," said Paulina. "I bet you she would know a good lawyer or several."

"It's worth checking out. See if we can get her help on this," I said. "I know if anyone would help us, it would be Mrs. Pennington."

I couldn't have been more right about that. You didn't get to be a crotchety old fairy without making your fair share of enemies. Mrs. Pennington had not only one but *three* lawyers on retainer, and she seemed to know exactly who to refer us to.

"You need to meet with Lauren Hammerthorne," said Mrs. Pennington. "She's the best of the three that I know, a real shark of a lawyer. She's got a golden tongue too, and she's not afraid to unleash it on those that truly deserve it."

That name seemed familiar to me for some reason, though I was having trouble placing it. I glanced at Paulina, struggling to remember why I thought I knew it.

Finally, it hit me.

"Now I remember," I said. "She's the one up with the billboard, isn't she? The kitsune lawyer with the gavel? The one that doesn't take any shit?"

"That's the one," said Mrs. Pennington. "She's worth her weight in gold, trust me. I love working with her, and I think you will too. I will say this though—she's a little on the different side. I haven't met many people like her."

"What does that mean exactly?" I asked. "How is she different?"

“She’s just really . . . blunt,” said Mrs. Pennington. “She was made to be a lawyer. She’s really a good person, but you have to peel away the hard outer shell before you see that. Personally, I think the job has jaded her. I don’t think the poor woman has much in the way of family either.”

“But you think she’s the best fit for the job?” I asked, not caring if she was too blunt. Blunt was what we needed right now. I needed someone who could cut through all the bullshit.

“Oh, absolutely,” said Mrs. Pennington. “She’s still the best.”

“Is she actually going to be able to see us though?” Paulina asked. “Our first recommendation wasn’t even taking new clients, and we’re really in a bind.”

Mrs. Pennington waved her hand. “Don’t you worry about a thing. One call to Miss Hammerthorne, and I’ll have you a meeting on Monday.”

I was ready to go out on a limb here. Lauren Hammerthorne had a decent reputation, and she made enough money to afford her own billboard in the busiest part of the city. I still wasn’t ready to pass judgment on whether that was a good or a bad thing, but I was willing to have a little faith.

“Do you think we’re making the right call?” asked Paulina, as we left Mrs. Pennington’s penthouse a short while later.

I shrugged. “With a name like Hammerthorne, I would hope that she’s pretty solid. I guess we’ll see what happens. I wasn’t too keen on the other lawyers that Mrs. Pennington mentioned.”

Paulina snorted. “I don’t think we need lawyers that specialize in getting out of DUIs or insider trading. From what Mrs. Pennington said, Lauren is more of a generalist though. Hopefully, she’s what we need.”

“What I need right now more than anything is a little time in the hot tub,” I said, once we got into the elevator. “It’s been a long week, and I need a relaxing soak.”

“You try being pregnant on top of all that,” said Paulina, poking my side. “I need a foot rub too.”

“I’ll rub your feet anytime you want, babe,” I said. “Just wait until we get in the tub.”

“Oh, that sounds like a promise to me,” she said, fluttering her eyelashes.

“Just you wait and see.”

As it turned out, we didn’t even make it home before Mrs. Pennington was calling us. Paulina answered the phone right as we turned to go down our street.

“Monday morning at eight o’clock,” said Mrs. Pennington, who was now on speakerphone. “Just don’t be late. She hates it when clients are late. I had to call in a favor to make this happen, so please don’t give me a reason to regret this.”

“We won’t, I promise,” said Paulina. “Thank you, Mrs. P! You’re the best!”

“Right back at you, Paulina,” she said. “Have a good weekend!”

After we hung up, Paulina received a text from Mrs. Pennington with Lauren Hammerthorne’s office address. Everything looked to be all set, and I was curious what we were going to find on Monday.

“Hopefully, she’s a nice person,” said Paulina, right as we opened the door. “And it’ll be easy to work with her.”

“At this point, I don’t want her to be nice. I want her to be vicious,” I said. “I want her to bite into EHS and not let go.”

“With a little luck, that’s what we’ll find,” said Paulina. “Now go get your trunks on. I’m in the mood to *soak*.”

I laughed. “I’ll grab some drinks. Non-alcoholic ones.”

“Hello and good morning. Welcome to Hammerthorne & Partners. Do you have an appointment?”

The girl behind the desk looked just a little too young to be working, but then again, she was a kitsune. And I noticed that the fox people of Dragonmont City had an ageless quality to them that made them all seem so fresh-faced.

“Yes, we have an eight o’clock,” I told her. “With Lauren Hammerthorne.”

“Wonderful, I see you here,” said the girl as her fox ears twitched. “Would you like some coffee? Or tea? Or perhaps an energy drink?”

“Just coffee is fine, thanks,” I said before pointing at Paulina. “But make hers decaf.”

“Perfect, have a seat and I’ll bring it right out to you.”

The kitsune left her desk, and I listened as her high heels echoed off the tiled floor. The office we were standing in was as elegant as I’d seen in the city. The tile on the floor looked to have been just laid recently, while the walls were a mixture of ornate wood and plaster that was blended together to have a really interesting effect.

The dominant piece in the room though was the shark in the corner. Carved entirely out of a single piece of wood, it was nearly as large as I was. It said many things at once, but the biggest thing it said was that Lauren Hammerthorne’s reputation was well-earned.

It definitely seemed like the office of a high-powered lawyer, and everything about it looked just a little bit intimidating. I wasn’t sure what to expect when we met her, but apparently Paulina had done her research.

“So I’ve looked up all the cases that Lauren Hammerthorne has tried,” said Paulina, pulling up her phone. “And she has a great record. Of the forty or so cases that have gone to trial, she’s won thirty-one of them.

“Not bad odds at all,” I said. “I bet she owns the courtroom when she gets in there.”

“That or she comes prepared. Or both. Either way, I hope it’s enough,” said Paulina. “Because I just want to get this flimsy case tossed out.”

“I’d say we’re in the best place to do that then,” I said, gesturing at the carved statue of the shark in the corner.

“That’s what makes me nervous,” said Paulina

When the time came, the receptionist led us back into the main office, where we followed another elaborately-decorated hallway until we came into someone’s private office. The office space was small, but it was entirely lacking in anything resembling warmth. On the desk was a simple

computer, a calendar, a notebook, and a stack of books, but there were no personal effects, no pictures of family on the desk or on the walls.

There wasn't even so much as a thing out of place. There were three pens aligned together in the desk, and not one of them was pointed differently than the others.

On the far side of the room was a door, and I could hear someone talking on the other side of it. It was a woman's voice from what I could tell, but it was muted because of the thickness of the door.

"I'm guessing that's her on the other side," whispered Paulina. "Think that's a meeting room or something?"

"Your guess is as good as mine," I said. "I just hope it's not her bathroom."

Paulina giggled. "You're bad."

Finally, after a few minutes of waiting, the door crashed open suddenly, only to reveal the same face that I'd seen on that billboard a month ago. Lauren Hammerthorne was a beautiful woman no matter which way you cut it. She had almond-shaped eyes that were sparkling green even if they were devoid of anything resembling warmth. She had fiery reddish-brown hair, almost amber in color, that was tied back in a smart ponytail. On top of her head, I could see two fluffy fox ears, and glancing a little lower, I could see high cheekbones that were only barely dusted with freckles.

She was wearing a smart business suit, with a dark-colored blazer and a white blouse underneath. Her skirt was sharp and professional, and it just barely hid her tail that was the same color as the hair on the top of her head.

Needless to say, Lauren Hammerthorne was incredibly hot. I just wish she looked more happy to see us. Part of it could have been that she was still on the phone when she came in.

"You tell them that I don't have time for their fucking games," snapped Lauren, walking across the floor like a runway model as her hair flowed behind her. "If they're not going to pay up, then I'm going to file an injunction and take their money from them myself. With my bare hands."

Paulina and I watched silently as Lauren had a back-and-forth with someone on the phone, though we couldn't tell who. Either way, I wouldn't have wanted to be in their spot as she hammered them.

"You damn well better, and make sure it gets sent over to my secretary before the end of the day," she snapped, hanging up the phone. She then seemed to register that we were there. She looked at both of us for a second before she sat down. "Hello, I'm Lauren Hammerthorne. You must be Mrs. Pennington's friends."

"Kevin and Paulina," I said, introducing ourselves.

She extended her hand across the table, touching mine with a very firm grip. I looked for any sign of warmth in her hard exterior but saw none.

"Thank you for seeing us with such short notice," said Paulina. "We didn't know what to do, and you came so highly recommended to us that we figured this was worth a shot."

"So tell me what kind of trouble you find yourself in," said Lauren, brushing past any niceties and getting right to the point. "Mrs. Pennington told me that you were being sued for some cockamamie reason, but she didn't give me much in the way of details."

"I'll fill you in," I said. "It all started when another maid service company tried to buy us."

I spent the next ten minutes telling her the entire story, from our initial rejection of EHS to the harassment that we received, and finally ending on them suing us after stealing half of our workers and tarnishing our online presence. Though I didn't see much in the way of sympathy from her, I could tell Lauren's wheels were turning as I described what was happening.

She also asked some great questions while I was talking.

"So you have no idea who egged your property?" she asked. "It's a hooded figure on your security tapes?"

"That's right," answered Paulina. "We've requested the tapes from the building to see if they ever lower their hood enough to get an identity, but so far we haven't had any luck."

“I’ll get those tapes for you,” vowed Lauren, writing it down in her notebook. “As well as any tapes from local businesses. Most criminals are smart enough to wear a hood, but they’re not intelligent enough to keep the hood on after the crime is committed. If they made a mistake, I’ll find it. Tell me about the reviews now. Any pattern that you’ve seen in them?”

“Somewhat,” I said. “They seem to come from new accounts with no other reviews, and they use similar language. There’s not really a way to link them back to EHS though.”

“There might be, if we can get some help from the webmaster of the forum they appeared on,” said Lauren, making another note. “I’m assuming you brought copies of the lawsuit with you?”

“Just one, here it is,” I said, handing it over to her.

Lauren took it out of my hand abruptly, which only made me give Paulina a sheepish look. So far, Lauren definitely seemed sharp to me, but every warning we received about her lack of warmth was definitely ringing true.

“I’m going to need to look up this statute in particular,” said Lauren as she flipped through the lawsuit. “But I’d say on the face of it, it’s definitely not worthy of a lawsuit with how outdated the overall city code is. My chances of victory in the courtroom are pretty good with this I’d say. At least ninety percent, and I don’t take anything under seventy-five to preserve my stats. So yeah, I’ll take your case.”

That was encouraging news, even if the mentioning of her stats seemed to confirm an old stereotype. I felt Paulina squeeze my hand as soon as it was said. Lauren must have realized that she’d given us some kind of hope though, because it was squashed in a matter of seconds.

“Of course, I’ve seen stupid juries throw out life sentences for less,” she said, barely looking up as she continued to flip through it.

“Yeah, but surely we couldn’t be seeing such a severe penalty for something like this, right?” I said. “I mean, it’s not like we’re out there killing people.”

“No, but without people breaking inconsequential laws, I wouldn’t have a day job,” said Lauren, still not looking up at me. “People get nailed for stupid shit all the time.”

That didn’t make me feel any better about the situation. And though the situation was serious, I was starting to get annoyed with how Lauren was treating it, like it was just another case to be won. I was starting to question whether she truly saw us as people who needed a little help.

Or if it was just another way to make some money.

“I’m going to do some research into this,” she said, after flipping through the entire file. “I don’t normally get involved in corporate lawsuits, but I’ve been here before. I’m assuming you’re going to want punitive damages if we can get this case tossed out, correct?”

“As punitive as it gets,” I said. “I’d like to counter-sue for their predatory tactics to try to force us out of business.”

This time, Lauren actually looked up at me. “Bingo,” she said. “Now that’s where the big money is to be made.”

“It’s not so much about the money though,” said Paulina quietly. “I just want to get my life back on track. I don’t need to strike it rich or anything. I just want all the harassment to stop and for us to be compensated for the lost revenue.”

“I’ll get you so much more than lost revenue,” said Lauren, blowing a raspberry. “Trust me, you need to hit them where it hurts. And the good thing about working with a large corporation like EHS, they’re going to have deep pockets. By the time this is all over, there’s a chance the three of us could be very rich people. They’re going to have a hard time feeding their families when I’m through with them.”

Lauren then snorted suddenly. “I’m only too happy to see vultures starve to death.”

I felt Paulina’s eyes on me, and I turned my head toward her. She didn’t need to say anything for me to read the look on her face.

And the look said that this wasn’t the way she wanted to go about this.

“Maybe I was being a bit too extreme with seeking punitive damages,” I said. “Listen, we just want compensation for the customers and employees that we lost, as well as the damage to our good name. I couldn’t care less if

we steal every last opal from EHS. I share Paulina's concerns—we just want our lives back in order."

Lauren glanced over at me again, and I couldn't tell if the look she was making was out of confusion or out of spite. I knew that there were many who would take what I said as being too lenient on a predatory corporation like EHS, but I wasn't the one with the reputation for being a shark.

I just wanted justice to be upheld.

"I have some homework to do," said Lauren, speaking to us again while keeping her head down. "Either way, I'm going to take your case. And I'm going to make those people *bleed*."

"Bleed?" squeaked Paulina.

"Is that really necessary?" I asked, before Lauren cut me off.

"Do I come over to your maid service and tell you how to do your job?" she asked angrily as her fox ears twitched. "No, so don't come here and tell me how to do mine."

That was just one step too far. The only reason we were here was to get a fair resolution to what we felt was an unfair situation. And after this latest rebuke, I didn't think I wanted to work with the great red kitsune anymore.

"I think we made a mistake coming here," I said, standing up and grabbing Paulina by the end. "It's obvious that you're no better than the people who drove us here in the first place. Not that I expected a lawyer to be the paragon of warmth, but I question whether you have a heart in your chest or not. Our goals definitely don't align, and I'm not going to become the thing I'm fighting just to make a quick buck. Good day to you."

I wish I could have captured the look of shock on her face as we left. For the first time that morning, Lauren had something that didn't go her way, and the moment was only too satisfying to me as we walked out and shut the door behind us.

As soon as we were alone outside the office, I felt Paulina rush into my arms.

"Thank goodness," she said. "That woman frightens me. I didn't know how we were supposed to work with her."

“We were just another case to her,” I said, shaking my head. “Not people in need of help. Everything I hate about lawyers was embodied in her. We’ll try to find someone else.”

Paulina smiled weakly. “Our list of lawyers keeps getting shorter.”

I knew how she was feeling. We didn’t exactly have a lot of choices right now, but the situation was far from hopeless. I put on a brave face for Paulina, even if I didn’t feel so brave inside.

“We’ll figure something out,” I promised her. “I just know it.”

That seemed to be good enough for Paulina, and we started walking hand-in-hand toward the lobby. It was right before we got there that I realized one big thing.

I left the lawsuit back in Lauren’s office.

I cringed on the inside a little bit at the thought of going back in there to retrieve it. The last thing anyone wanted to do after a successful storm-out was have to go back inside, and yet here I was.

Oh well, I could suck it up and deal with it for the time being.

“Wait here,” I told Paulina. “I forgot our file. Let me grab it before we leave.”

I decided not to knock when I got back to her door. It just didn’t feel necessary after the way things ended. I didn’t go rushing into the room though, taking slow but deliberate steps back into Lauren’s office.

I almost expected her to bite my head off when I arrived, but the exact opposite happened.

Instead of facing the desk, Lauren had turned her chair around to face the window. She was leaning back into it, and I could just barely see her fluffy ears peeking above the leather. In her hand was her phone, and right now, it was replaying a voice message on repeat.

“I’m so proud of you for winning your case today, muffin,” said the voice of an older woman, who I immediately suspected was Lauren’s mother. “Everything is going great here, and it looks like the cancer is finally responding to the chemo. I’m exhausted but in good spirits. I miss you and

can’t wait to see you again soon. It’s been too long. You ought to come home more. Anyway, I love you. Talk to you soon.”

I froze in my spot as I listened to the entire message replay about three more times. The last time, I heard what sounded like a whimper mixed with a sigh, and I knew just what was happening on the other side of that chair.

I was caught in an awkward spot, and the only thing I wanted to do was grab my file and beat a hasty retreat out of there. The only problem was that Lauren swung around in her chair, and her teary eyes went wide when she saw that I’d reappeared.

She didn’t try to defend herself, nor did she offer some kind of haphazard excuse. When she didn’t say anything after a few seconds, I spoke up instead.

“I’m just here to grab the file that I left behind,” I said, pointing to it on her desk. “I’m sorry for intruding,” I said, almost as an afterthought.

“It’s okay,” she said, picking it up and handing it to me. “Here you go.”

“Erm, thanks,” I said, taking it. I still felt all kinds of wrong for being here, but at least I had what I needed. “I’ll be going then. Again, I’m sorry to intrude.”

I turned to leave but before I made it halfway across the room, I heard her call out for me.

“You were right about me,” said Lauren, after taking a deep breath. “I don’t think I have a heart anymore.”

She reached up to wipe her eyes before shaking her phone with her hand while I turned around to face her again. “Even my own mother said so. If you just read between the lines.”

I knew better than to dwell on that, and I didn’t want to make her any more upset, so I tried to change the topic.

“I’m sure your mother wouldn’t say that if you asked her,” I said.

Lauren closed her eyes and shook her head. “I’ll never know. She died about two weeks after she left this voicemail.”

Crap. That one hurt so bad that it even stung me. I felt myself moving to a strange place, motivated by sympathy for someone I barely knew.

“I’m sorry,” I said. “That must have been very difficult for you.”

“I wouldn’t know,” said Lauren. “I wasn’t there when it happened. I was late to the funeral too, because one of my trials went longer than I expected.”

It was at that point that I realized Lauren wouldn’t be winning any best daughter awards any time soon, but I think she knew that anyway. And at that moment, the one emotion I could read in her eyes was regret.

“Whenever I’m down, I just like to listen to her voice,” said Lauren, sniffling. “It’s the last thing I have of her, you know? Every time it makes me upset, but I can’t help myself.”

“I’m sorry if I had a role in making you down to begin with,” I said.

“Don’t be. You had every right to say what you said. And you know something? You’re exactly right. I’m a cold-hearted bitch who was late to the funeral of the last family I have. After my mother died, I had no one, not a single person. Not even friends, because the rigors of law school make it impossible to have a social life. Thank the spirits that I’m good at what I do, because I’d never get by on personality alone. I thought being a lawyer would be the key to living the good life, but all it’s done is bring out my worst qualities—those that were already lingering below the surface and just needed a good push to get to the top.” As if to emphasize the point, Lauren pushed the air with both hands, like she was pushing her good self off a cliff.

“It’s never too late to change,” I said. “I know a lot of people who changed their lives. They didn’t like how their life was going so they did something completely different. I’m one of them. Before I was reborn, my life wasn’t going anywhere. And now I have something to fight for. People to live for. A life that makes me happier than I’ve ever been. It’s never too late.”

She grabbed a tissue and wiped her eyes. “Maybe. Either way, you don’t have to stay and listen to me. I’ll recommend you to another partner at the firm if you want someone else to represent you. I figure it’s the least I can do, but you don’t need to stand there and be my therapist.”

In any other situation, I might have taken her invitation to leave. I might have left her office content in the knowledge that someone that needed to be humbled had been. But something kept me rooted to my spot that I couldn't explain.

I think it was the sight of seeing someone truly in need that I just couldn't stand.

Instead of leaving, I sat down at her desk once again, making Lauren look confused.

"I think more than anything you just need someone to listen to you," I said. "Maybe it's a therapist or maybe not. But at least you don't have to pay me."

To my surprise, she started to laugh through the tears. "You're the one paying me, remember? I charge by the hour."

"Yeah, well, I think that can be waived in lieu of the circumstances?" I asked. "At least everything since the storm-out?"

She started to nod. "Yeah, I can do that."

Chapter Twelve

I DIDN'T REALIZE I'd spent nearly thirty minutes in Lauren's office. It wasn't until Paulina texted me asking what was going on that I told her to grab some coffee from the shop on the bottom floor of the building and I'd catch up with her later.

My focus right now was on Lauren, and despite knowing each other for such a relatively small amount of time, she let the floodgates open as soon as she figured out that I was going to stay.

"I've always wanted to be a lawyer," she said, explaining her background. "Ever since I was a girl. I wanted to be just like the ones you saw on television—tough operators that could work a courtroom and always get what they wanted. My family encouraged it, but looking back, I wished they'd nurtured something else. I don't like who I've become as a lawyer."

"The woman that I see on the billboards," I said. "The tough-as-nails lawyer who will always win your case. Your reputation precedes you."

She scoffed. "My reputation is what makes me so miserable. When I graduated from school, I thought I needed to be tough. I thought the only way to success was being an alpha bitch that everyone had to react to. What I realized after all this time is those alpha lawyers I watched on television—they're fictional. Made-up. If their families get pissed at them or they can't keep a boyfriend because they work too much, it can just be hand-waved away in the next episode. Real life isn't like that."

"And so after losing all my friends and my family, I just threw myself more into work because it's all that I had. And in doing so, it made me more of a mega-bitch lawyer. And then I couldn't keep any new connections. It's a vicious spiral that I can't escape from."

"All you need is to break the cycle," I said. "And a friend who's understanding and not going to run from you at the first sign of trouble."

"Let me know when you find one, will you?" she said sourly. "I don't have the best luck with friends."

I even managed to surprise myself with what came out of my mouth next.

“I’ll be your friend,” I offered. “I don’t have to just be your client. I’ll be your friend too.”

She looked like she didn’t know what to say.

“But you fired me,” she said quietly. “Not even fired me because that implies that you hired me to be your lawyer to begin with. We didn’t even make it past our first meeting before you walked out.”

“Maybe I wasn’t being a good friend to you then,” I said. “Friends ought to be more understanding, especially when it comes to someone else. And now that I know a little bit more about you, I want to give you another chance.”

Hope appeared in her eyes. “Really? You mean that?”

I nodded. “This is what I was wanting to see from the beginning.”

“What? Crying?”

I chuckled. “No, I just wanted to see that you were a real person, not some robotic lawyer that only thinks about how much money she can make on a case. That’s what we are too—real people. And we could really use your help.”

“I probably shouldn’t admit this to you, but part of me was relieved when you walked out,” she said. “Not because I didn’t want the case or anything, but because I don’t have a ton of experience with cases like these. A good portion of my cases settle outside of the courtroom, but I have a feeling that this one isn’t going to come to that. I’m going to have to do a lot of work, and then again, there’s no promise I’m going to—*we’re* going to win.”

“That’s a chance I’m willing to take,” I said, putting on a brave face. “Besides, it’s not like I have a ton of other options.”

I said that last part jokingly, and I was grateful that she seemed to understand that from the moment it was said.

“I’ll do my best for you,” she said. “And I’m going to try really hard to only leave the mega-bitch lawyer for the courtroom and not with you.”

“I’d appreciate that very much,” I said, offering a genuine smile.

“We don’t have a ton of time to prepare for this,” she said. “But I think the idea of counter-suing under the guise of predatory intimidation is our best option. I think, and I’m not completely sure about this, that the city has some anti-monopoly laws on the books about what constitutes corporate harassment. I’m going to research them and see if anything that EHS has done violates those laws. I think it’s our best chance here. The biggest burden we have though is proof, so I’ll see if we can get the surveillance video from your office building, as well as reach out to the webmaster of your forum.”

I was happy to hear all of that, but the next thing I said had nothing to do with the case whatsoever.

“That’s great, but do you want to come over to our house tonight?” I blurted out. “Maybe have dinner with us? You can stay longer than that too. We usually watch our shows in the evening, play a few games, or even take a dip in the hot tub, but no pressure if you don’t want to do any of that or all of it.”

I think I even shocked myself with the offer, but more than anything else, I thought that the thing Lauren needed the most was a friend.

And besides myself, I had a lot of people back at the house who’d be willing to extend the olive branch to someone in need.

What I didn’t know was how Lauren was going to take that offer. Part of me wondered whether the lawyer personality was going to come back, or whether she was going to martyr herself on the altar of loneliness because she thought it was her lot in life.

What I didn’t expect was how quickly she accepted my offer.

“That would be really nice,” she said, giving me an unshakable smile. “You’d really let me come over for dinner?”

“Absolutely,” I said. “And I think Nikki is cooking tonight, so I hope you like elvish pizza.”

“I love elvish pizza,” she whispered. “How does she prepare it? I love roasted pheasant.”

I couldn’t help but laugh. “Then I think you’re going to be really happy with dinner tonight.” I grabbed a pen and scribbled our address onto it. “Here’s our address. Come by any time after five. Cool?”

She took the scrap of paper like it was the missing piece to her life. At that moment, I understood just how lonely she was that an evening with some potential new friends was almost akin to getting a second chance in life.

“I’ll be there,” she promised. “And I’ll have time this afternoon to start my research. I’ll try and bring you some plans tonight.”

“No pressure,” I said. “I don’t care if we don’t talk about the case at all. Tonight is about blowing off some steam with friends. And just wait until you meet all the girls—they’re a blast.”

I could tell that she was not-so-secretly thrilled about all of this. And part of me was happy to give her a second chance. I realized that I judged her just a little bit too early, and I made sure to apologize for it before I left her office.

“I’m sorry about earlier,” I said. “I shouldn’t have jumped to conclusions about you so quickly.”

“I still don’t think you’re wrong,” said Lauren as a smile started to grow on her face. I noticed how radiant she looked when she smiled. “But I appreciate you saying it regardless.”

By the time I left, I was feeling much better about our situation than I did the first time I left her office. I made my way down the elevators, emerging on the first floor and entering the coffee shop to find Paulina.

I found my pregnant goblin goddess sitting at an empty table, with her feet propped up and one hand on her growing stomach. It made me grin just to see her, but I could tell she was interested in why I took so long.

“Everything okay?” she asked me once I sat down.

“Everything is going to be just fine,” I said. “But I think we’re going to have one more person at dinner tonight.”

The look on her face was pure shock.

That evening, I opened our front door to find our spunky new lawyer standing outside looking very out of place. She was still dressed in her smart attire from work, but I could see there was a range of emotions on her face, ranging from uncertainty to just plain old fear.

“I brought a bottle of wine,” she said, holding it up with one hand. “And then I remembered that Paulina was pregnant, but it was too late to take it back.” Her eyes went wide. “Wait, is Paulina pregnant? I just assumed she was because of the stomach, but she’s not actually just fat, right?”

I chuckled at her blunt greeting. “Yes, she’s pregnant. And it’s all good. There are plenty of non-pregnant people here who will enjoy it. And you’re just in time. The pizza’s about to come out of the oven.”

I brought her inside and took her coat, noting the way there was a hole in the bottom for her tail to poke through. I thought it was cute, and I had a feeling the other girls were going to make her feel right at home.

“Come this way,” I said, bringing her to the kitchen. “All the girls are so excited to meet you.”

“*All* of the girls, you said?” asked Lauren, looking a little pale.

“Breathe,” I joked. “They’ll be on their best behavior.”

I meant exactly what I said. It hadn’t taken long to convince Paulina of my plan, and I knew she would be the hardest one to sway because she’d been in the initial meeting with me. After I got her on my side though, we let the entire house know that Lauren was on the way, and I told them not to do anything that might make her feel uncomfortable.

Then I remembered that I was dealing with a house of crazy goblin women, so I suppose the results I got were in line with expectations.

For one, the moment we entered the kitchen, all eyes were on Lauren. My eyes naturally fell on two people—Nikki who was chanting some kind of demonic incantation over our food (what I hoped was a blessing) and Kennedi, who was prancing around in a tiny bikini while wearing a cowboy hat.

“Howdy, partner!” greeted Kennedi, tipping her hat in her usual zany fashion. “Welcome to the farmstead. Now Tex here tells me y’all need a friend. Well I’m here to tell you that any friend of Tex’s is a friend of mine. Now while don’t you yonder your way closer to that table, and we’ll have supper with all the fixin’s.”

“Umm, hello,” said Lauren, greeting Kennedi with an awkward handshake. “Um, are you from the southern part of Dragonmont City?”

“Well, I sure as shit ain’t no yankee, if that’s what you’re asking,” said Kennedi. “Now Tex here tells me that you make a living out of book learnin’. Care to explain that black magic sorcery to me? Because we don’t invite no devils to live in this house, oh no, no way.”

“She’s joking of course,” said Nikki, scowling at Kennedi. “We only worship one demon here, and his name is Malfiore, the demon lord of suffering and violence.”

“Great first impressions, both of you,” I said, smacking my cheek with my hand. “Really well done.”

Kennedi beamed with a smile. “I should’ve been an actress. I think I missed my calling.”

“Maybe a porno actress,” grumbled Sadie. “That’s about as far as you’d get.”

Kennedi planted both hands on her hips. “Well the jokes on you because Kevin said I’m so good in bed, I might as well be a pornstar.”

“Okay ladies, focus,” I said, looking at the terrified Lauren. “We have a guest here so please put your crazy aside for two seconds so that she feels comfortable.”

Kennedi blew a strand of hair out of her eyes and smiled at Lauren. “Hey, I’m Kennedi. We might be crazy, but we like to have fun.”

“I think I’m starting to see that,” said Lauren warily.

One by one, the girls introduced themselves to Lauren, ending with Sadie.

“And I’m Sadie. So what do you do for fun Lauren?”

“Um, mostly send out subpoenas and settle cases for millions of opals.”

Sadie smiled. “Fun! You’ll fit right in!”

I kinda had to laugh at the assortment of personalities we had gathered under one roof. I was happy to see that the girls welcomed Lauren with open arms, and soon enough that deer-in-headlights look that she had when she walked in evaporated. At one point, Kennedi and Sadie dragged her into the other room to play a game after dinner, and most of us gathered around just to watch.

“I hope you like *Grand Theft Auto*, because we really love it,” said Kennedi, putting a controller in Lauren’s hands.

“We love it right *now*,” said Sadie. “But I imagine we’ll have a new flavor of the week soon though.”

“Hey!” said Kennedi, pointing her finger at the redheaded goblin. “I ride for my family. I *die* for my family.”

Sadie rolled her eyes. “You’re such a dork.”

“Yeah, maybe, but at least I’m cool as fuck,” said Kennedi, shrugging.

“I think the jury’s still out on that,” said Lauren, which made Sadie giggle.

“Yes! Lawyer puns! I love it!”

“I have plenty more where that came from,” said Lauren, grinning from ear to ear.

“That doesn’t seem like the high-powered lawyer that I met this morning,” noted Paulina quietly by my side. “If this is the other side of the mighty Lauren Hammerthorne, I kinda like it.”

“Me too,” I said. “I think she’s been starved for attention to be honest. People aren’t meant to be alone. We need friends. And a family.”

“And a family of friends,” said Paulina, hugging me tightly.

“Well, I think they’re going to be busy for some time,” said Bridgette, who was on my other side. “Do either of you want to get in the hot tub?”

“Count me in,” I said, rubbing my shoulder. “I could use a soak.”

“Count me out,” said Paulina. “I’m starting to feel like a bowling ball. I don’t know if I could even get into the hot tub at this point.”

“You’re not *that* pregnant yet,” said Bridgette, touching Paulina’s stomach. “And you’re small enough that we could pick you up if we needed to.”

“Meh, I’m going to pass,” said Paulina. “And instead, I’m going to have a bowl of triple chocolate brownie ice cream!”

“Did someone say ice cream?” asked Cassidy. “Because I’m listening!”

Paulina put her arm around Cassidy. “Come with me, if you want some ice cream,” she said, in a weirdly robotic voice.

Nikki ended up going with them, leaving just Bridgette and I alone.

“I’ll get my trunks on and meet you up there?” I said.

“Count on it, stud.”

Bridgette never failed to leave me speechless. Even just her walk away from me in the hallway was sexy, especially as she swung her hips from side to side like some kind of erotic pinball. As hot as it was, it was nothing compared to how she looked on the terrace, after changing into an epic bikini that could have woken the dead.

“If anyone needs some floss, I’ll just send them to you,” I told her, making her laugh after one look at her bikini, which was more string than it was fabric.

“Are you trying to tell me you don’t like it?” she replied, forcing a pouty face. “Because I wore it just for you.”

“I love it, but I think I’d love it more if I could do something about it.” I pointed my finger below us. “But we have company.”

“Oh, live on the wild side a little, will you?” purred Bridgette. “Lauren is going to be stuck gaming for quite a long time. Surely that means you and I can have a little alone time?”

My brain was saying no, and that it was wrong to do that while we had a guest in the house. My cock, on the other hand, was saying let’s get this show on the road.

Tonight, it looked like the smaller brain was going to win that battle.

Bridgette was right about one thing—we ended up having at least thirty minutes of privacy before someone else came up to join us. That gave us

more than enough time for me to sit on the edge of the hot tub while Bridgette sucked my cock like her life depended on it.

“Mmm,” moaned Bridgette, slapping the underside against her fat tongue. “I’d love for you to cum down my throat.”

I wasn’t about to deny that request, but she still had to work at it before I unloaded in her mouth about ten minutes later.

“See?” said Bridgette, putting her nipples away by hiding them with the string. “Isn’t it so much more fun to be bad with me?”

“You’ll never hear me regret anything about spending time with you, intimate or not,” I said. “I just didn’t want our guest’s only memory of her first night with us to be walking in on me getting my dick sucked.”

“*First* night you said?” asked Bridgette. “As in, you envision more nights to come?”

“I’m not sure,” I said honestly. “I’m just kinda playing this one by ear. Part of me wants to see how she handles tonight, but long term? I have no idea.”

“Do you have the hots for her?”

The question took me by surprise, though I know that Bridgette didn’t mean it that way. For a former stripper, questions like that were a lot more matter-of-fact than they were with other women.

And to answer that question honestly, I was kinda attracted to Lauren. She looked awfully good in that pencil skirt she was wearing earlier. The fluffy ears were definitely adorable, and when she opened up to let me see the real her, I couldn’t help but be intrigued.

“Uh oh, you’re overthinking this one,” said Bridgette, covering her mouth with a smile. “You are attracted to her.”

“Yeah, I am. A little,” I said. “Don’t get me wrong, I’m not inviting her to live here or anything. More than anything, Lauren just needs a friend. Or friends.”

“And if there’s some benefits added into that, then why not?”

I pursed my lips. “I feel like six women keep me more than satisfied. I have a hard time keeping up with all of you.”

“But you do such a wonderful job at it.”

“Thanks for the compliment, but I’m not looking to add anyone else,” I said. “Not unless I start cloning myself.”

Her eyes lid up. “Oh! That could be serious fun!”

I splashed her with the water and she laughed. We kept talking for another fifteen minutes or so before I heard the door to the terrace. Lauren was the last person I expected to see, but she was the one that came over, using a towel to cover her entire body as she moved.

“Is it okay if I get in too?” she asked us. “Sadie said it would be no problem, and she even let me borrow one of her suits.”

Lauren didn’t give me time to react because she opened the towel to reveal a chaste black one-piece that was cut on the sides to show more skin. I recognized the suit, but whereas it was a perfect fit on the diminutive Sadie, it was definitely tight on Lauren.

And that meant that it left very little to the imagination.

“Come in, we were just talking about you,” said Bridgette, flashing me a mischievous smile.

Lauren froze right as she lifted her leg over the rim. “That’s usually not a good thing when someone tells you they were just talking about you.”

I could tell that Bridgette wanted to have a little fun, but I squashed it, not wanting to scare Lauren away.

“We were just hoping that the girls downstairs didn’t traumatize you,” I said. “Especially Kennedi. I should probably apologize for anything that’s come out of her mouth tonight.”

“Let’s just say that someone like Kennedi could probably never be a lawyer,” said Lauren as she finished getting in. “Or a judge. Or on a jury. Or even in the courthouse for that matter. She’s a lot of fun, but does she ever get serious?”

“If that day ever comes, we’ll let you know,” I teased. “I still haven’t seen it yet.”

“And if you think she’s zany, wait until you meet her aunt and uncle,” added Bridgette.

“She might be crazy, but I like her,” said Lauren, shifting in her spot to get the jet on a certain portion of her back. “Oh wow. Right there. That feels *sooooo* good.”

“It’s getting hot in here,” teased Bridgette.

Lauren turned red in the face. “Sorry. It’s just been a long time since I’ve been able to truly relax. I haven’t had a fun night like this in . . . well, ever.”

“Don’t you have a hot tub at home?” asked Bridgette. “Or at least a fancy bath tub with jets? I thought lawyers made bank.”

“The bigger question is finding time to use all the toys that you can buy being a lawyer,” said Lauren. “I have enough things, but never the time to enjoy them. If not for being here, I’d be buried in a mountain of paperwork in my office. I even feel a little guilty about being here and not doing any work tonight.”

“That’s not what tonight is about,” I said, shaking my head. “Tonight is about a bunch of friends letting loose together. No work.”

Lauren smiled at me. I noticed that whenever she was happy, her ears tended to twitch. “Friends, right. I’m just glad that no one here seems to take it personally when I put my foot in my mouth. Which I inevitably do on occasion. Just given enough time.”

“We’re very understanding people,” said Bridgette, nodding.

“So Bridgette, you’re a maid too?” asked Lauren. “Have you always been a maid?”

Bridge shook her head. “No, before I was a maid, I was a stripper.”

I watched Lauren bite her lip suddenly. “Oh. I’m sorry.”

Bridgette looked confused. “Don’t be sorry. I was the best damn stripper you’ve ever seen. The best in the entire city.”

“See what I mean about putting my foot in my mouth?” Lauren asked me.

“Bridgette won’t take it personally, I promise,” I said.

“Not at all,” added Bridgette. “And we just got a stripper pole so if you ever want to learn any moves, come see me.”

Judging by the look on Lauren’s face, she never thought about using a stripper pole before.

“Oh, um, thanks!” she stammered.

“Don’t mention it,” said Bridgette, winking as she stood up in the tub. “I’m getting really pruny, so I’m going to go inside.”

We both waved to Bridgette, and I found it hard not to watch her ass with that piece of floss going right up the crack. When she was gone, it was just Lauren and I.

“She seems really nice,” said Lauren. “And I really hope she didn’t think I was looking down on her for being a stripper. I mean there are worse professions. Not that it’s a bad one per se, but it doesn’t have the best reputation.” Lauren sighed abruptly. “I can’t stop saying dumb things.”

It was so cute that I laughed. “It’s okay. Stop being so hard on yourself.”

“I used to have a friend in law school who said I was the dumbest smart person she ever met,” admitted Lauren. “I think she was right. Of course, I have no idea what she would say today. We . . . lost touch with each other.”

I could read between the lines on that one, guessing that Lauren’s somewhat abrasive personality was what put the finishing touches on that friendship.

“It happens all the time,” I said. “But if you ask me, friends should give each other more leeway than most.”

“You’re really trying to make this happen, aren’t you?” she asked. “This friends business?”

“Are you saying that I shouldn’t be friends with you?” I asked, raising an eyebrow. “Do you have some skeletons in the closet that I should be aware of? I would think that if anyone could get away with murder, it would be a lawyer. You know all the ways to avoid getting caught.”

Lauren snorted. “The worst person would be a lawyer. Yes, we know the law, but we’re also vain and self-absorbed. Most of them would break the cardinal rule—don’t tell anyone about what you did.”

“Good to know that I’m not hanging out with an axe murderer then,” I joked.

“Do you want to know something silly?” she asked. “I think I’ve smiled more today than I have in a long time.”

“You say that like it’s a bad thing.”

Lauren’s head tilted from side to side. “Just stating a fact. I had a great dinner. I met some lovely new people. And strangely enough, I’m having a great time. It’s like I had forgotten what fun feels like.”

“It’s always good to be reminded of it,” I said. “Especially when times are hard.”

“Have you always been so kind?” she asked. “When it comes to strangers?”

“Ah, no,” I said, chuckling. “Before I was reborn, I was a lot like you. Just going through the motions trying to keep my head above water. And sometimes, I felt utterly crushed by life.”

“I know how that can feel.”

“But ever since I’ve been here, I don’t feel that way anymore,” I continued. “I’m really happy now about where I am, and the people that I share my life with. That’s why this case means so much to me. I think anyone else might have sold GGMS to EHS in the first place, but I’ll never do that. It’s the dream of the people that are closest to me. I care about them so much that it’s become my dream. And I’ll never do anything to jeopardize that.”

“They’re really lucky to have you,” said Lauren. “Not a lot of people are that strong with their convictions.”

“Maybe all it took was the knowledge of how different life can be,” I said, shrugging. “Now that I have this second chance at life, I’m not going to squander it.”

“All the girls downstairs care for you a great deal,” said Lauren, surprising me with the sudden change of topic. “This entire house is one big relationship, isn’t it? Not just a friendship, but a real relationship?”

There was no sense in denying it so I didn’t. “That’s right. We’re one big family. We all love each other. It’s a romantic kind of love that we share.”

“No wonder you’re so happy all the time then,” said Lauren, letting out a throaty laugh. “You’re one guy with six women. I bet the world is your oyster then, isn’t it?”

“It’s not just about the sex though,” I said. “Yes, the sex is a great part of it, but I’m also the guy that gets to spend quality time with Cassidy going to meet our favorite witching team. I’m the guy that gets to game with Kennedi and Sadie, and listen to their awful shit talk. And Paulina and I are having a baby together. How amazing is that? I get to share my life with the six of them, and I wouldn’t trade that for anything.”

“You’re not like a lot of men that I’ve met,” said Lauren quietly. “I’ve had to spend my time around submissive paralegals, hotshot lawyers, and old, crusty judges. Most of them have a fatal character flaw, and it’s obvious what it is after talking to them for more than five minutes. I’ve been watching you since this morning trying to figure out what yours is.”

“Have you figured it out yet?”

She shook her head. “No, but I’m determined to. I think you don’t really know someone until you know them with all their flaws.”

“That’s a wise way to look at it,” I said.

“Or a really stupid way,” she added. “It’s the lawyer in me talking. The one that can’t turn off the logical part of her brain whatsoever.”

“At least I hope I don’t share the same fatal flaw as the crusty judges,” I joked.

That helped to lighten some of the tension between us, but I could tell by the way she was looking at me, she was trying to figure me out. Whether that was from a professional standpoint or a personal one, I wasn’t sure.

But it gave me hope that today wasn’t just going to be a one-time exception.

“So I’m just going to throw this out there for you,” I said, after about another fifteen minutes of light chatter. “I know this might surprise you, but we tend to eat dinner every night.”

“Oh, how bold of you,” she joked.

“And our table seats eight, so we’ll always have the extra room,” I continued. “So if you know anyone that wants to eat with some friends, they’re always welcome.”

Lauren pursed her lips as she thought about it. “What if I end up losing your case? Will there still be room for me at the table?”

“Absolutely not,” I said, shaking my head. “So you might want to take the offer while it stands.”

She giggled. “I think I’d like that. Maybe not every night. And I still need to do a lot of research for my job over the evening hours. But I’d give the whole world for a group of stable friends. I really would.”

“If that’s the case, there’s only one thing I need to tell you then,” I said, trying to make my face look as somber as possible.

Lauren bought it. She looked fearful for a moment. “What’s that?”

I let a smile appear. “We’re having tacos tomorrow. Be here by five.”

Chapter Thirteen

Lauren ended up making it for taco night.

She also made it the next night, when we had Sadie's famous chicken alfredo, which was so good that I thought it should be featured on the food network.

In fact, Lauren only missed one night throughout that next week, which was only missed because she was getting so behind on her work that she needed a night just to get fully caught up.

"Otherwise, I'd totally be there," she said, talking to me on the phone while I was in my office. "Besides, I'm getting really close to beating Kennedi in *Mario Kart*."

"When did you guys switch to *Mario Kart*?" I asked. "It was still *Grand Theft Auto* a few days ago."

"Two days ago," said Lauren. "On meatloaf night. You know, the same night that we watched that finale for the mafia goblin show. What was the name of that again?"

"*Sleeping With Da Fishes*," I said. "We love that show."

"I'm loving it too," she said. "But anyway, I promise I'll see you tomorrow, okay?"

"Sounds good. Have a good night."

As it turned out, I was getting really used to having Lauren around. And her help with the case was proving to be an incredible benefit.

"Okay, so the subpoena has been sent to the webmaster already," said Lauren, who was catching up with me the next night, when we were able to meet again. "He has a week to provide all information regarding the logins for those accounts that trashed the business, which should give us more than enough time to link them back to EHS should we so choose. I've also gotten word that the building owner has received his, so we should have that security tape within the week. There is one thing that bothers me though."

“What’s that?” I asked.

“I’ve reached out to former employees of EHS, trying to build a case that would support them being an intimidating and faceless corporation,” she said. “Most of the girls I’ve reached out to won’t talk to me. They won’t say a word, even when I cornered one the other day on the street. My guess is that they’re so frightened about repercussions that they won’t say anything bad about EHS.”

“Is that going to be a problem for us?” I asked, wincing.

“Not necessarily,” said Lauren confidently. “I don’t need them to talk to me as much as I just need to show the jury that something or someone has scared them so much that they don’t want to talk. They’ll be able to figure it out from there that EHS is intimidating them. Sometimes you don’t need the proof as much as you just need to seed the grain of doubt.”

“I’m really glad we have you to play all the lawyer Jedi mind tricks,” I joked.

Lauren giggled. “I wish it was always that easy. Unfortunately, we’re going to need real evidence soon, so here's to hoping that our subpoenas come back with the information we want.”

“Here’s to hoping,” I said, raising my glass.

Lauren was right about one thing though—we had to rely on a lot of hope. And as the next week went by and the evidence was produced thanks to Lauren’s subpoenas, we realized that proof for our case was still very light.

“They’re good,” said Lauren, right before pressing play on the video as I met with her in her office. “Whoever this is, my guess is that they’ve done it before. Look here. They seem to know exactly where the cameras are. They look away every time they switch to a new camera, always careful to keep their face covered. This isn’t their first rodeo, that’s for sure.”

“What about once they get on the street?” I asked. “Any luck there?”

“They disappear into the crowd pretty quickly,” answered Lauren. “Not a great option either way. I’m afraid we can’t prove anything with this.”

That wasn’t what I wanted to hear, but I knew we still had one more tool to work with. “What about the webmaster files?” I asked. “Any luck there?”

I could tell by the look on her face that they weren’t going to be much use to us.

“Are you familiar with a VPN?” she asked.

“What person my age isn’t?” I replied with a snort.

“Well, so is the person who set up these accounts,” said Lauren. “All seven of them used a VPN when they were registered, so we don’t know where they’re actually from. According to the webmaster, that’s a very unique thing to see so many VPNs because whoever did this didn’t want it to be traced back to a real person.”

“Isn’t that our answer right there?” I asked. “If it’s that rare and it happened seven times to us, with seven accounts all displaying the same toxic commentary, doesn’t that point to EHS even in a roundabout way?”

“We can certainly suggest that,” said Lauren. “But again, there comes a point where you need actual evidence. And none of this is helping us make our case any more solid.”

I felt utterly frustrated by that point—enough so that I propped both elbows on her desk to hold my head. “That’s definitely not the news I wanted to hear.”

Especially because we lost another contract that morning. We were now down to about sixty percent of the living spaces we normally serviced. So far, the loss of work hadn’t really been felt because we lost the new girls with it. But if we lost another big one, I was afraid that we wouldn’t have enough work to go around with the remaining girls.

Lauren sensed my frustration and reached out to touch my hand. “There is a silver lining today. How does this look?”

She passed me a file, which contained a thick report many pages long. On the first page was a typed list of about thirty different maid businesses—many of which I recognized.

“What’s this?” I asked. “Tell me it’s the list of places that are willing to testify against EHS?”

“Not quite,” said Lauren, tilting her head. “Instead, it’s the list of companies that I can prove took work without being properly rated. As you can see, nearly every maid service in Dragonmont City is represented on that list. I also have sworn statements from some of your oldest clients about the work that you do. My hope is to use both to completely dismantle EHS’ case.”

“So from the sounds of things, no one is going to get what they want with this case?” I asked. “We’re going to destroy EHS’ position, but we’re not going to be able to prove what they did against us. So no one’s going to be happy.”

“I’m sorry, Kevin,” she said, lowering her eyes. “Unfortunately, that’s how it goes sometimes. There are some cases where neither party wins. It’s just about minimizing the losses.”

I understood what she was trying to say, but it still wasn’t making me feel any better. If anything, I thought that this just might be making EHS’ job easier. Here we are trying to fight them, but we just couldn’t just land a knock-out blow.

And the longer that they lasted against us, the worse our position got.

“We need something,” I said. “An ace in the hole. Something to bust the door wide open in this case. What that is, I have no idea. But we need it.”

“If you can think of something else, I’m all ears,” said Lauren. I found it cute that her ears twitched as soon as she said that.

“You’ve already been amazing,” I said. “Beyond what I thought you could be.”

“Yeah?” she said, seeming surprised by the compliment. “You mean that?”

“Absolutely,” I said. “I can’t tell you how much I appreciate your help.”

She started to blush. “I’ll do anything for my friends. Let me keep working on this, okay? We have a few more days until the trial starts. We’re not done yet.”

“Okay,” I said, letting out a deep breath as I stood up. “I’m heading home now. Catch you for dinner?”

“You better believe it,” she said.

That evening, I was still trying to figure out what to do about the trial. I felt like I was coming up against the limits of what we could try, but my stubbornness wouldn't let me quit until I felt like every avenue had been explored.

Unfortunately, we were all out of ideas, especially when it came to getting an ace in the hole.

I felt like I was letting it affect my attitude, especially when Sadie pointed it out while we were lounging together on the couch. She was watching some new movie, but I'd been staring off into space for most of it.

"You know, it's more fun whenever we can both watch the movie," teased Sadie, wiggling her body against me. "You're never this distracted with me. I'm starting to feel like I've lost my touch."

"You could never lose your touch," I said, wrapping my arms around her. "But there's just so much on my mind right now."

She shifted so that she was partially facing me. "We all know how hard you've been working to prepare for this trial. We all appreciate you so much for what you're doing."

"I just feel like it's not enough," I said. "I wish the outcome was more guaranteed. From the way it stands now, it's a toss-up."

As I was talking, I noticed that Nikki was carrying a green candle outside the room, walking along the hallway. She was wearing this strange black robe, which had a red-colored hood that was hanging from the back. Nikki was muttering something that I couldn't make out, but it was enough to catch my attention.

It wasn't the first time she'd done something odd like this. In fact, I'd say living with Nikki was more about getting accustomed to the unusual, because she was just one strange girl. Tonight though, something seemed different, especially when she started waving incense around.

"Uh, Nikki, what are you doing?" asked Sadie, also noticing the dark elf's movements.

“Just preparing the dream sequence initiation,” said Nikki matter-of-factly. “Nothing major.”

Sadie and I shared a look with each other, no doubt wondering what the hell a dream sequence was. I suspected it was probably something to do with Malfiore and dismissed it, going back to Sadie.

“I’m going to try to be more present,” I said, squeezing her tightly. “But I still might have to ask you a question about the first half of the movie.”

Sadie purred and placed her head against my shoulder. “Just don’t ask too many questions. I think they’re about to get it on.”

They were indeed, and we spent the next two minutes watching a very detailed sex scene. I knew I was feeling stressed when watching the scene didn’t make me want to get down to business, but I hoped that would pass when this struggle with EHS was over.

Sadie and I watched the rest of the movie in peace, and at one point, she even grabbed some popcorn for us to share. When it was all over, we both went to bed, though there was no funny business tonight since we just went to sleep.

When I woke up next, I was very aware of the fact that I was no longer in Sadie’s bed. I didn’t even know where I was. The world around me was fuzzy—like it was there but not there at the same time. It reminded me of several dreams that I’d had before, where the edges are always ill-defined and it seemed like nothing was solid.

Except this was more solid than a normal dream. It was some weird in-between state that I couldn’t put my finger on.

I’d manifested on some kind of plain that looked a lot like some darkened graveyard, except it was missing the headstones. A low-lying brick wall surrounded the property on all sides, save for one creepy-looking wrought-iron gate just to my left.

In the far corner, I spotted three things that seemed seriously out of place. The first was this large obelisk, like the kind I saw in pictures of Ancient

Egyptian ruins. It was taller than I was, raising probably at least twenty or thirty feet into the air over that corner. Every side of the obelisk was covered in markings—runes that I couldn't make out.

They were ugly runes too. Many of them had jagged lines and symbols that looked like it couldn't possibly stand for something good.

At the base of the obelisk, the second item that I saw was an altar. This altar was darker than the night itself, and there were four green candles situated on each corner, but nothing else in the center.

The last item that I saw was the unmistakable form of a dark elf. Nikki was in my dream, looking as clear as if she was standing in front of me in real life. And she was busy too, holding a book and chanting some kind of weird language just like I'd seen her do earlier.

Suddenly, the words dream sequence seemed to make a lot more sense to me, and I started to panic when I figured out what she was up to.

"Nikki?" I asked hesitantly, stepping up to the base of the obelisk. "What in the world are you doing?"

Nikki didn't answer me. In fact, she didn't even look at me. She continued to chant as she walked around the base of the obelisk. Every so often, she sprayed something that looked like blood on the base, staining the stone as she walked.

I'll admit—I was getting a little creeped out. I had no desire to be sacrificed or to meet the infamous Malfiore, I suspected that one of those two things was about to happen.

"Nikki, can we cut this out now?" I asked, trying to touch her shoulder. I was surprised that my hand went right through her, like she was nothing more than a cloud.

What happened next also caught me off guard. Thick purple vines appeared out of nowhere, shooting out from the base of the obelisk and wrapping around my wrists and ankles. As quickly as they appeared, they pulled me back to the obelisk until I was pinned against it, unable to move.

Now I was really starting to panic.

“Nikki!” I yelled, my voice getting firmer. “Seriously, cut this out. I don’t know what you have in mind or what’s going on, but this is not how I want to spend my night!”

I just wish that she heard me. Instead, Nikki continued her trance-like chanting, reading from her book like nothing else in the world mattered.

That’s why it was strange for me when she suddenly stopped after a couple more minutes. As the trance ended, the glazed-over look in her eyes vanished. Finally, I felt like Nikki was really “seeing” me, and that’s when things just went from strange to downright bizarre.

“Kevin!” said Nikki, dropping the book and rushing over to me. “Are you okay? You’re not hurt, are you?”

“Well, the pressure on my wrists doesn’t feel amazing,” I said. “Can you get me off of this? What is this thing anyway? Where are we?”

“I never meant to hurt you,” said Nikki, shaking her head and trying to pull me loose from the vines. “I just meant to secure a demonic blessing for us. For success in court against EHS. For that, I needed to do a proper summoning, but I lacked the number of followers necessary to do it. Did you know you need at least ten demonic followers to summon a demon these days?”

“Listen Nikki, that’s really fascinating, but I’d really prefer not to be tied up anymore,” I said.

“Right, right,” she said, pulling loose one of the vines and letting me slip my hand through. “Anyway, the next best thing was to go to Malfiore’s underworld temple through the use of a dream sequence. That I could do by myself. I just needed to be able to link you into the dream with me as a potential sacrifice.”

My hands froze. “A potential what now? Tell me you didn’t just say sacrifice.”

“Oh no, it’s okay!” said Nikki, waving her hands. “I just started the sacrifice incantation, but I didn’t finish it. As far as Malfiore knows, you’re just a sacrifice that wasn’t completed.”

“Okay, you’re really not making this any better,” I said. “At all. Can we get out of here?”

Nikki’s shoulders slumped. “But what about meeting Malfiore finally? You want to miss out on that?”

“It’s a risk I’m willing to take,” I said, pulling my legs out of the constricting vines. “How do we get out of here? Is there an incantation to take us back to real life?”

“But the whole point of this was to get Malfiore’s blessing,” pouted Nikki.

“Who *dares* seek my blessing?!”

Both Nikki and I jumped at the sudden thunderous voice that came from just behind us. As we turned, I could see that the dark sky seemed to lighten, presenting a glowing aura that seemed to be getting bigger. When the aura was big enough, it changed from a pure-white light to something that blended purple and green into an ever-increasing spiral.

Suddenly, a pair of wings shot out from the spiral, spanning so wide that it looked like it could have enveloped us easily. The wings flapped once, a terrifying motion that caused a gust of wind to sweep past us. Lastly, a pair of red, demonic eyes appeared in the middle, and they were locked on Nikki and I.

“M-Malfiore?” squeaked Nikki, almost like she was seeing the demon lord for the first time. “Is it truly you?”

“Who seeks the wicked and powerful Malfiore?” thundered the voice. “Speak now or die!”

“It is I, your unholiness,” said Nikki, prostrating herself in front of the lord. “It’s me Nikki, of the Seventh Street Elves! You know me, right?”

Before Malfiore could answer, Nikki’s head whipped around to look at me. “Get down!” she hissed. “And tell him who you are. He’ll know us!”

I didn’t get a chance to answer. As soon as Malfiore heard who Nikki was, his entire tone changed. The glaring look in those red eyes disappeared, replaced by something that was oddly . . . softer.

“My faithful servant Nikki,” said Malfiore. “Is it really you?”

“Yes, my lord!” said Nikki, with tears in her eyes. “I’m so happy to see you!”

“And if you’re Nikki, this must make you the illustrious Kevin, your mate in unholy matrimony?”

“Realistically, she’s just my girlfriend,” I said. “We haven’t exchanged vows or anything. But yeah, it’s me, Kevin. How are you?”

I realized how lame my “how are you” sounded after it was out, but I wasn’t exactly a professional when it came to interacting with demon lords.

“I’ve waited for an eternity for two of my faithful followers to summon my presence,” said Malfiore. “I wish it had been a proper summoning but I won’t say no to a dream sequence either.”

Nikki gave me a look that said I-told-you-so, but right now, I was still trying to figure out whether this demon lord was going to end the niceties and look at me as the potential sacrifice that I was.

“We’ve come here to seek your blessing, O Exalted Master of Mischief,” said Nikki. “Bestowed on two of your most faithful servants.”

“Ah yes, it’s been eons since my servants have asked for my blessing,” said Malfiore. “I’ve almost forgotten what it feels like to give it. In order to do that, let me assume my proper form so that I might bestow my blessing on you.”

I’ll be honest—I wasn’t looking forward to seeing Malfiore’s real body. The wings and the eyes were one thing, but I knew demons were ugly creatures even in the best of times. I figured that he would also be strangely intimidating with bulging muscles, and that was the last thing I wanted to deal with.

Nevertheless, the purple and green spiral started to spin again, removing the wings and the eyes from our sight. A new purple and green cloud started to grow out of it, becoming larger and larger until it finally exploded directly in front of us.

As the cloud vanished, I didn’t see bulging muscles or oddly-placed loin clothes. Instead what I saw was a much thinner figure, with shapely legs,

dark, polished armor, a trim and tight stomach, and two bulging lumps around the upper chest area.

Long purple hair flowed from the head, but it was interrupted in two areas where a pair of wicked-looking horns emerged from the skull. For the face, I saw two eyes with purple irises, as well as purple lips and a forked tongue that snaked out of Malfiore's mouth.

It was at that point that I realized the inevitable truth.

Malfiore was a *woman*.

Chapter Fourteen

I THINK it was the state of shock that Nikki and I were in that had the most to do with our silence. I certainly couldn't discount the fact that Malfiore's appearance was equal parts sinister and attractive (which was a connection I definitely wasn't expecting to make).

"Well?" asked Malfiore, her voice becoming as smooth as velvet as she planted one hand with purple fingernails on her luxurious hip. "Where is the reverence for your demon lord? I'm *waiting*."

I saw Nikki suddenly prostrate herself completely, touching her head against the ground.

"Yes, very good," purred Malfiore, taking a step closer and caressing the back of Nikki's head. "You've been an excellent servant, Nikki."

At that point, Malfiore looked at me, no doubt noticing that I wasn't prostrating myself either. Call me stupid, but it just didn't feel right to me. I wasn't a "believer" in the same guise as Nikki, so the whole thing just felt wrong to me.

"Ah, a paragon of strength and virtue," said Malfiore, noticing that I was still on my feet. "I have my uses for that too. Rise, Nikki, and stand next to your lover."

I could still see the shock on Nikki's face once she was upright, and I could tell Malfiore did too.

"Is there some kind of problem, Nikki?" asked the demoness, tapping the side of her cheek with her finger. "You haven't said a word since you've seen my face."

"It's just that . . . I didn't know that . . ." Nikki kept stumbling for her words, until she finally blurted it out. "I'm so sorry, your unholiness, but I didn't know you were a woman!"

Nikki smashed her head with her hand, no doubt out of embarrassment. I felt for the girl too. I couldn't imagine being such a devoted servant to a demon only to find out it was really a demon*ess*.

If Malfiore was fazed by the admission, she didn't show it. Instead, the demoness smirked and trailed her fingers along her bust, which looked very big and secure in the plate of purple-tinted armor she was wearing.

"Nikki, Nikki, Nikki," purred the demoness. "You have nothing to be embarrassed about. Most in the world of the living only know me in my monstrous form, which resembles that of a bulging demon lord with rippling muscles and a strong masculine persona."

At that mention, Malfiore stepped closer to me, her eyes glued to my crotch. The demoness winked at me before resuming her speech.

"However, my monstrous form, no matter how intimidating it is, is not the real me. It is rather a necessary guise that is needed to maintain my position as one of the overlords of Hell. You're feasting your eyes on the *real* Malfiore, a woman with scintillating intelligence and diabolical curves." Malfiore let out a low moan as her hands suddenly grabbed her breasts. "My real form is much more sensual than my monstrous one."

"After all this time, how could I not have known?" whispered Nikki. "I've studied everything about you! I've read the ancient texts. I've spoken with all of the few followers you have left!"

Malfiore looked peeved at the mention of only having a few followers left, but she merely crossed her arms and waited for Nikki to finish.

"Nothing in anything that I heard or read mentioned you being a woman," finished Nikki.

"That's because there is nobody that is still alive today that knows the truth," said Malfiore. "Only those that I select to be my priestesses—those inside my inner chamber—get to know the real truth. And I haven't had a priestess in at least a thousand years. Until today."

Nikki's face suddenly welled up with excitement with those last two words. "Until today?" she repeated.

Malfiore smirked and started a slow nod. "You've proven yourself worthy in casting a dream sequence that could summon me—a feat not performed in a long time. Your reverence and commitment to me is well-known. Kneel before me, Nikki."

Nikki dropped to the ground quickly and bowed her head. Malfiore moved closer until she could put her hands on Nikki's head. She muttered something in a foreign language for several moments until she finally stepped back.

"Now rise, Priestess of Malfiore," said the demoness.

When Nikki rose to her feet, something seemed different about her. The anxiety of the previous encounter seemed to have evaporated completely. I noticed a physical difference as well. Nikki's red eyes now were decidedly purple, as if she'd been infused by Malfiore's malevolent spirit.

Nikki suddenly kissed the back of Malfiore's hand. "Thank you, your unholiness. Thank you!"

Malfiore took a step closer to me and started to appraise me. I wondered if she was going to make me a priest, but she had something different in mind.

"And now for the blessing that you seek," said Malfiore, again appraising me from head to toe. It felt a lot like I was being checked out, especially with that coy smirk on her lips. I felt like a piece of meat that was about to be devoured.

Malfiore started speaking to Nikki without breaking eye contact with me. "Priestess Nikki, you have been infused with my essence. For that reason alone, we will be performing the carnal blessing that is worthy of the aid you seek."

"A carnal blessing?" I asked, swallowing heavily. "What does that mean?"

Nikki spoke like she knew what it was all along. Part of me guessed it came with the infusion of Malfiore's spirit, but she spoke like there were no surprises.

"It means we're going to have ritual sex until all three of us achieve orgasm," said Nikki calmly, as she began to shed the robe she was wearing. "At the moment of the third orgasm, we will have Malfiore's blessing."

Okay, that was the *last* thing I was expecting to hear tonight. Don't get me wrong—I had a feeling something was trending this way with Malfiore's

behavior and her lack of modest clothing, but to find out that this was what was needed to get the demoness' blessing, I was a little flabbergasted.

"It's been too long since I've been fucked by a proper human cock," purred Malfiore, invading my personal space as her purple nails raked along the outside of my pants. "Priestess Nikki here seems to hold you in high regard. I hope you live up to your reputation."

I decided right then and there that I wasn't going to let anyone down. If that was a challenge in regards to my sexual prowess, I was determined not to disappoint. A confident look appeared on my face as I took off my pants silently, exposing myself completely below the waist.

I don't know if Malfiore's dark magic had some kind of effect, but I was harder than any time in recent memory. I also looked positively *huge*, like it was double the normal size it should be.

Seeing my boldness, Malfiore's eyes latched onto my member and she licked her lips. "I like his audacity. It's not a timid move to expose your cock to a demon lord. I have great expectations of you now, Kevin."

Now that Nikki and I were either entirely or partly naked, it was Malfiore's turn. The sexy demoness faced us both as she extended her hands out to her sides. Her magic made it so that her armor unclasped without her having to touch it, the latches clicking suddenly. The shoulder pad armor was the first to go, revealing shoulders with definite shape but not without that feminine softness.

The chest armor came next. As soon as it released from her body, it disappeared from sight, revealing two large breasts that were capped with purple nipples. Malfiore's stomach, which had been partly obscured by the armor, was now fully visible. Her tight abdominals were on display, looking like a tray of freshly-baked muffins right before reaching her armored skirt.

Like the chest armor, it too evaporated into nothingness, showcasing a pubic mound without a stitch of hair, as well as smooth, velvety lips that just looked to be waiting for my attention.

As Malfiore was now exposed in front of us, I saw a bed appear out of thin air, floating down from the dark clouds until it landed next to the altar.

Larger than a king size, it reminded me of the one we saw in Andy and Greta's old orgy room.

"Priestess Nikki?" purred Malfiore. "You know what to do, don't you, my lovely?"

Nikki nodded confidently and approached the bed without saying a word. She sat down and laid on her back, scooting so that her legs were hanging off the edge. It was the perfect position for me to step between them and have my way with her.

As soon as Nikki was situated, Malfiore floated through the air until she landed directly on top of Nikki's face. The demoness wiggled her hips until she suddenly closed her eyes and bit her lip, no doubt as Nikki started to eat her pussy.

"Now that is simply divine," muttered Malfiore, settling on top of the dark elf. She let out a deep moan before her eyes opened and locked on me. "Kevin, what are you waiting for? My priestess needs your attention immediately."

Given the weirdness of the situation, I don't think anyone would have blamed me if I said no. The problem with that was, like my bulging cock, my horniness had also been kicked up a few notches. And at that moment, the only thing I could think of was achieving sweet release, hopefully inside one of these two gorgeous women in front of me.

I was moving before I even knew it. My cock was in my hand, keeping it level as if I was being guided like a heat-seeking missile into Nikki's pussy. Part of me wondered how it was going to fit, because Nikki wasn't the largest girl and my cock had taken on truly monstrous proportions.

But when the time came, it slid into her like there was never any doubt. I watched, enthralled, as Nikki's tight pussy devoured the monstrosity between my legs.

My eyes rolled to the back of my head when I felt her constricting warmth. My hands naturally went to Nikki's shapely thighs, keeping them parted as I pulled nearly all the way out and slid back into her honey once more.

I was in ecstasy. It would be so wrong to call this heavenly, but it was far from a hellish experience. I don't know how it was possible, but Nikki

seemed wetter than usual, with just a little more grip on my shaft. Every time I slammed my hips home, it felt like I was on the brink of cumming.

But it never came. Just when I thought I was going to get to unload, the feeling was prolonged. I could tell that Nikki was in a similar condition, and it looked like she didn't know what to make of it. I didn't even know what to make of it, not knowing why I wasn't cumming.

After a while, I figured Malfiore was teasing us by keeping Nikki and I on the brink of orgasm but not letting us go through it. Every stroke felt like it could be the last stroke, and yet I just kept hammering away at this gorgeous dark elf under me.

I had to admit that being this close to a fully nude Malfiore was still intimidating, especially when the demoness thrust her breasts in front of me willingly.

"Suck," she commanded, without even a glance at her breasts. This time, I didn't hold back. I leaned forward and wrapped my lips around her left nipple, using my tongue to lather over it. I was surprised when something that tasted deliciously sweet squirted into my mouth, making me only want to suck more. When I pulled away to see it finally, I saw a creamy purple essence that I figured to be some kind of demonic breast milk.

Either way, it tasted incredible, and I wasted no time in tasting her other nipple, suckling from it until I had my fair share.

Now all three of us were really getting into the act. In front of me, Malfiore had thrown her head back as I sucked her nipples, and I soon felt her fingernails raking the hair on the back of my head, keeping me locked against her. When she opened her purple eyes next, I could see the lusty desire written in them—a silent plea for more.

Below us, Nikki's body was writhing with passion. Not only was she slamming her hips hard against me, but she was giving everything she could to Malfiore's pussy, taking the demoness to the brink of pleasure.

When Malfiore started to chant in that weird language again, I knew she was getting closer. She never quite made it though, because Nikki started to spasm under me at that moment, letting out several full-body shudders as she came.

Honestly, I was envious of her. Being constantly on the edge of orgasm was starting to run me ragged. I wanted to cum more than anything, but Malfiore's magic meant that I couldn't get there on my own.

Part of me suspected that was part of the plan. And that suspicion seemed to be confirmed when Malfiore rolled off Nikki's face, revealing a dark elf that looked like she'd been glazed by purple cream.

"This is . . . the best experience . . . of my life," said Nikki, running her fingers through her sweat-soaked hair.

"Darling, you're a delightful little pussy-eater," said Malfiore, stroking Nikki's face with her finger. She collected a small dollop of purple cream on the end and brought it to her lips. "Mmm, I still taste marvelous."

Nikki tried to sit up, but she ended up falling over. I could tell by the way she rolled that taking my monstrous cock had been harder for her than she let on.

"I might need to sit this next round out," said Nikki, who still looked completely dazed. "Is that okay, your tainted malevolence?"

"Of course," replied Malfiore, who now rolled on her back and spread her legs, revealing the most inviting pussy that I've ever seen in my life. The lips were slightly parted and still sticky with her own juices, but I'd never seen one that I wanted to dive into more than at this particular moment.

"I'm just going to complete the blessing with your man here," said the demoness, grinning at me while she crooked her finger in my direction.

Now I understood why Malfiore wasn't letting me cum. This was meant to be the final piece—the big show. She wanted to keep all my cum for her pussy. Well, if that's what the demon wanted, that's what she was going to get.

I swore that my cock had grown even bigger since I pulled out of Nikki, but when I placed the tip at Malfiore's waiting quim, it seemed like it was pulled in with a force of suction.

"Yes, slide it in!" she hissed. "Penetrate me! Put that bold, audacious human cock in me now!"

I had a feeling she was going to have to work on her dirty talk, but I did what she wanted anyway. We both groaned with approval as I slid all the way inside the sexy demoness, splitting her folds until it was wrapped obscenely around my massive shaft.

“By the old demons and the new, this is exquisite,” said Malfiore, squeezing her breasts until her knuckles turned white. “I never knew a human cock could be so wondrous!”

There are only a few things in the world that could boost the ego like hearing that kind of praise from an immortal demoness. Even still, it was Malfiore’s sudden encouragement that caused me to unleash that last bit of strength that I had.

I gave her everything left in me and more. I suspected like the other enhancements that Malfiore had increased my speed, because my hips were truly moving in a blur. I felt like I could have powered a small town with just the movement of my hips alone, and judging by Malfiore’s moans, it was having the desired effect.

“Bad spirits and blazing infernos!” moaned Malfiore loudly, whimpering as I assaulted her demonic pussy. “Oh fuck!”

I saw her purple nails grip the sheets under us, but Malfiore wasn’t ready to cum just yet. She was close (we both were), but I kept up the pressure. I held her legs tight, giving me just enough leverage to keep her within my grasp. I could feel her pushing back against my thrusts, swallowing my cock with every deep penetration.

And yet, the thing that made me cum finally was the massage that was going on *inside* her pussy. It was like being inside Cassidy again, but this time I could feel pressure against every square inch of my shaft—pressure that seemed to vibrate. It was Malfiore’s finishing move, and I didn’t stand a chance.

“I’m . . . so close! So close!” yelled Malfiore, moaning loudly as she smashed her hips against mine. “Oh, fuck me! Fuck me harder damnit!”

Suddenly, I watched as her forked tongue slipped out of her mouth, slithering like a snake. It only added to the eroticism of the moment,

mostly as thoughts of her tongue wrapped around my cock assaulted my brain.

I could then hear Nikki's encouragement in my ear. "Fuck her, Kevin. Fuck our demon lord. Make her cum on your magnificent cock."

Wanting Malfiore to get there before I did, I spared no energy in making my hips piston against her body. I watched as the demoness' mouth fell open suddenly, her body flushing into a deep, dark purple right as her orgasm threatened to boil over.

In the end, it was her nipples that caused her to cum. At the last moment, I reached forward and gently pinched each of them, rolling the nub around with my fingers.

It was the sensation that she needed. Suddenly, Malfiore's body shook violently. She started thrashing against the bed, and I was a little worried she might knock me out with her horns. For several long seconds she continued to shudder until it finally stopped, and I saw a white mist erupt from her mouth.

When Malfiore's eyes focused on me next, it was with the satisfied content of having an earth-shattering orgasm. Now I could feel her take over, using her hips to meet my thrusts with well-timed regularity. It felt like the demoness kept pulling me deeper into her body after every stroke, so much so that I thought there was a chance she might consume me. And the deeper I went, the more pleasurable it became.

It was all too much for me. I could feel my body giving in, crashing over the line between sanity and madness. When I finally came, I could feel *pints* of cream shooting into her body. Like the rest of me, my seed had been artificially increased until the point that it was seeping out of Malfiore as I kept pumping it. Even when I withdrew my cock, my purple-tainted cum shot out several strong jets that coated the demon lord's lower half.

And then my sweet Nikki got into the action. She tried to capture the beast on her own, and in the end I almost drowned her. By the time I was done squirting, Nikki looked like a glazed donut.

If it bothered her, she didn't show it. Instead, she was on a desperate mission to scoop up as much cum as she could, bringing globs of it to her mouth and sucking her fingers clean. When she finally had enough, I could see her stomach was bulging much the same way Paulina's was.

"Dear malicious . . . hick . . . spirits," said Nikki, covering her mouth when she hiccuped. "I've never had more fun in my life."

"That was deliciously wicked," agreed Malfiore, scooping up another dollop of my cum to savor. "I have to commend my priestess for finding a mate with such a virile cock. You will loan him to me from time to time, won't you?"

"Anything for you, your unholiness," replied Nikki, lowering her eyes.

"Wonderful," purred the demoness. "I know I'll want to taste him again. Simply fantastic."

"You weren't so bad yourself," I said boldly, which made Nikki look fearful at talking to a demon lord so bluntly.

Malfiore let out a sinful laugh as she caressed my thigh. "You haven't seen anything yet. Wait until the next time we couple if you truly want to see how much I can blow your human mind."

As soon as she said the words, Malfiore stood up from the bed and spread her arms. Within seconds, her armor had reappeared and all my semen that covered the lower half of her body had evaporated.

At the same time, Nikki had been uncovered too. We were still naked in front of the demoness, but at least we weren't covered in purple-tinged cum any longer.

"And now for the bestowing of my blessing," said Malfiore as she placed her hand on Nikki's forehead. She muttered a few words that I didn't understand until suddenly Nikki raised her head.

"Thank you, O Evil One," said Nikki. "We live only to serve."

"Malfiore always rewards her followers," purred the demoness.

That might have been the case considering there were less than ten of them, but I thought it would be bad form to mention that right now.

“Is that everything?” I asked, watching Nikki pull away completely satisfied. “Is that all the blessing is?”

Malfiore raised one of her sculpted eyebrows. “Were you expecting something different?”

I shrugged. “I don’t know. Maybe I was thinking we’d get some kind of advice. Our company is on the brink of failure. I just thought that our powerful demon friend might have more to say than just giving us her blessing.”

I thought I might have pissed her off with that statement, but I was truly desperate. And I thought I’d earned the right to speak frankly after making her cum so hard. Nikki looked like she was too scared to even poop right now, but she always treated Malfiore with more reverence than I did.

“You want some advice?” said Malfiore finally. “Then here is this. What is the one thing you haven’t tried yet to make this case work out in your favor?”

“If I knew what that was, I would have tried it already,” I replied.

Malfiore shook her horned head. “No, you need to *think*. What else could you have tried?”

I was at a loss about how to answer that. I figured she was getting at some kind of demented answer, like going postal on the EHS headquarters, but apart from landing me in prison, it did little to help our prospects.

“Let me tell you a small story,” said Malfiore. “Eons ago, I battled with the great Valushasa for dominion over the storm lands.”

“Valushasa?” I repeated, having heard that name before. I couldn’t place it for some reason though. “Why do I know that name?”

“It’s one of the lesser gods of the orcs,” replied Malfiore. “And he’s a total dick. I can’t stand that bastard.”

As soon as she said orc, it hit me.

“I heard the mayor swear to Valushasa before,” I said. “He’s an orc. That makes sense.”

Malfiore didn’t look interested in the mayor. “Either way, Valushasa and I were very evenly matched, and we fought for decades without one figure coming out ahead. It wasn’t until I swayed his second-in-command to my side that I was able to triumph. The second-in-command stabbed Valushasa in the back, and ever since that day, the orc god hasn’t dared to challenge my dominion.”

Malfiore then let out a sigh as she flipped her hair. “In other words, see if you can turn one of the enemy’s people. You might be surprised what kind of information you can learn. It might be the only way you can truly beat EHS.”

It was sound advice, and I was grateful to hear it. At that point, I’d never considered that as an option, but the ideas were starting to flow.

“Thank you, O Evil One,” I said, bowing my head. “We’re grateful for your help.”

“Go now, my servants,” she said, waving her hand as she lost interest in us. “Leave me to my post-orgasm high. May your enemies forever fear you and dare speak your name.”

I wasn’t sure how the dream sequence was supposed to end, but suddenly everything went gray. When I awoke again, I was in my bed, still snuggled against the backside of Sadie.

And now I had an idea.

Chapter Fifteen

MY GRAND IDEA started to really take shape as I devoured a stack of pancakes the next morning. They were made with love by Nikki, who definitely seemed different this morning now that she was an official priestess of Malfiore.

Even the pancakes seemed to reflect that. I'm not sure how she got them shaped like the torso of our favorite demoness, but I definitely appreciated the effort. Especially when she put the cherries where the nipples ought to go.

"It's the attention to detail that really makes you stand out about the rest," I joked, when she put the plate in front of me for the first time.

Nikki smirked. "What she did to us really worked. I feel infused with energy this morning. Like I could take on the world, or at very least do my job without getting the company in trouble."

"She's really special, isn't she?" I said, right as Sadie walked into the room, letting out a yawn.

"Who's really special?" asked Sadie.

"Um, no one," said Nikki suddenly, as her coolness evaporated. "Definitely not Malfiore. Ha! Because Malfiore is a he, not a she. You know—not transgender or anything. Definitely a guy. With *muscles*!"

Both Sadie and I stared at her with a bewildered look. I didn't say a word, but apparently Sadie expected this kind of weirdness from Nikki because she shrugged and went looking for a plate. "Suit yourself, Nikki. I thought it was obvious that Malfiore was male."

"Right?" said Nikki, brushing her forehead nervously. "So obvious!"

I lowered my voice so only Nikki could hear. "Why don't you want them to know that Malfiore is really a woman?"

"Only her true servants should know that," whispered Nikki as she squeezed my arm. "And right now, that's just you and me."

It was kind of weird, but then again, it was Nikki. And in a strange way, it was intimate for us to have that unique connection that no one else did.

So I just let it go, giving her a sly wink in the process. “Yeah, I can’t wait to pray to Malfiore again,” I said, hamming it up. “I hope *he* answers my prayers.”

“Oh, *he* totally will,” said Nikki, winking back at me.

Sadie rolled her eyes as she sat at the table. “Be weirder you two. Seriously.”

“I don’t know if I can,” I said. “But I have an idea this morning. Something that might help our case. Something we haven’t tried yet.”

“What’s that?” asked Sadie.

I sat back in my chair and smiled. “I need to talk with Esther.”

Sadie, and the rest of the girls in the house, thought that I had lost my mind. As we all gathered around the table over the next half hour, none of them (save for one exception) seemed to think it was going to work.

“I’ve known Esther for many years,” said Kennedi. “And she’s truly at home being with EHS. She’s not going to turn on them for us.”

“I have to agree with Kennedi on this one,” added Paulina, one hand resting on her very pregnant stomach. “Esther is a vile person. Kevin, you know this from the first time we went up against her. Even without EHS, I think she’d prefer to see us get buried.”

“Maybe or maybe not,” I said. “I’ve noticed something with Esther. Whenever Veronika is around, Esther is definitely more of a good cop than a bad cop. I don’t think this is intentional. I think Esther has some misgivings about how she sold out to EHS, and I think we might be able to use that to our advantage.”

“I think she’s as soulless as her beard is long,” said Bridgette. “The woman doesn’t have a heart.”

“What do we have to lose?” asked Nikki, the only girl that wanted to try the plan, no doubt because she knew what inspired it. “The worst that can happen is that she says no. Our situation can’t get any worse.”

“Nikki has a point,” said Cassidy. “We don’t have any other options left.”

The table became very quiet at that point. Seeing my chance, I stood up and prepared to get ready for the day.

“I’ll go see Esther this morning,” I said. “And hopefully, I can force a miracle to happen.”

It wasn’t hard to track Esther down at all. All of the offers that we received from EHS contained her contact information, including the location of her office within the EHS building. It also wasn’t difficult to get a meeting with her, because I suspected she was expecting my call that morning when I rang her.

“Well?” asked Esther as soon as she picked up. “Do you have good news for me or what?”

“We need to talk,” I said. “I’m near your office downtown. Can you meet with me?”

“Just you?” asked Esther, no doubt confused about why I wanted to meet her without Paulina. “I guess I can squeeze you in.”

“I’ll be there in fifteen minutes,” I told her.

“Tell the receptionist near the elevator that you have a meeting, and I’ll see you when you get here,” promised Esther.

That was easy enough to do, but I didn’t want to go there empty-handed either. For some reason, I picked up a small bouquet of flowers from a street vendor before I arrived.

Not that I was trying to add Esther into the harem. Women with beards were pretty low on my scale of attractiveness, but I figured that Esther probably never had flowers brought to her before.

I also believed you could attract more bees with honey, so I picked out a pretty bouquet of lilies and brought them with me.

The building that EHS was located in seemed to match the company perfectly. It was an older building, made of red brick and definitely in need of some renovations. The inside was musty too, no doubt because its

heyday was probably fifty years prior. The floor creaked as I walked through the lobby, and I noticed half the lights were out for the various floors once I was in the elevator.

Still, once I reached the right floor, I approached the receptionist desk only to see a very familiar face.

“Hey, Kevin,” said a very apprehensive Misty, lowering her cat ears as I approached. I could tell she was a bundle of nerves about seeing me, but there was no sense in being mean to her. Misty had done the best thing for her, which was taking the better offer. As upset as that made me, it didn’t mean I was willing to give up on her yet either.

“Hey, Misty!” I said brightly, setting the flowers on the desk. “I’m here for a meeting.”

She looked bewildered by that, but then her eyes fell on my flowers. “Um, are those for Esther?”

“You bet,” I said. “Is she ready for me?”

I saw a smile appear on her face. “She is. Let me take you to her office.”

She gestured for me to follow through a set of double doors. The floor continued to creak as we walked.

“Are you liking it here?” I asked her. “Are they treating you right, Misty?”

Misty shrugged. “The pay is fine, but the culture is a little . . . rough.” She leaned in closer to me. “I miss you guys like crazy.”

“I’m going to get you back one day, Misty,” I told her. “Maybe even today.”

“I wish,” she said, with a loud sigh. She gestured to a door on the opposite wall. “Just through that door. Good luck today.”

“I’ll need all the luck I can get,” I said. “Thanks!”

I wasn’t sure what to expect from Esther’s office, but when I got there, it still managed to surprise me. One look around her office showed me just how much pride Esther had for what she did. An entire wall was full of plaques and awards, mostly from her days before she was bought out by EHS. I saw several pictures of Esther when she was younger (and her

beard was much shorter), sporting her full maid outfit and looking very prideful.

Of all the things I knew about her, her pride was one of her most consistent attributes. It was also why she viewed GGMS as upstarts when we had our first showdown. That's what made Esther such a hard person to figure out. On the face of it, she was the opposite of the people that EHS looked to hire.

Mostly because she had a lot of pride for the work that she did.

What it meant to me was seeing if I could use that to put her firmly in our corner.

"Well, this is a first," said Esther as soon as she saw the flowers. She leaned back in her chair and kicked her legs up on the desk. "I'm not going to sleep with you, Kevin."

"Trust me, I wasn't asking," I said, putting the flowers on her desk.

"Then what are these for?" she asked. "Because if they're a bribe, you're short a little less than thirty million opals."

"They're a nice gesture from one professional to another," I said. "When was the last time someone brought you flowers?"

Esther couldn't answer that, which only seemed to confirm my earlier suspicions. She shifted in her seat uncomfortably.

"I want to talk about the case," I said. "And I wanted to start off on the right foot. You should get those in some water soon, by the way."

"So talk then," said Esther. "Are you here to give in? Because I'll be honest with you—I don't think I can make this case go away anymore. Veronika is committed to this."

"*Veronika* might be," I said, choosing my emphasis carefully. "But what I want to know is how you feel about it."

Esther's eyes narrowed. "What do you mean?"

I opened my mouth to say something, but the door to Esther's office opened suddenly, revealing none other than chatty Thora.

“Esther, are you sure you don’t have any uniforms in a smaller size?” asked Thora as she rushed into the room wearing a maid outfit that looked like it was meant for a goblin three times her size. She saw me and blushed right away, having a similar reaction to Misty. “Oh, I’m sorry. Hi, Kevin.”

“I’m busy right now, Thora,” snapped Esther, pointing to me. “Wait outside for me.”

Thora nodded her head and left, but not before giving me a strange look. With how many times I’d seen that look on a different woman’s face that morning, you’d think I’d be getting used to it.

“I don’t know how you put up with her,” said Esther, touching her temple. “She’s not very talented, but the worst thing about her is that she never shuts up.”

“She was still pretty new to us,” I said. “She’ll get there with proper training, I have no doubt.”

Esther shifted in her seat. “Maybe if I had the right people to train her, she’d get there faster. The last offer we made you was to allow six of your people to come over to us. We paid you more than fifteen times what the company is worth. I still don’t get it, Kevin. I know it’s not an easy choice, but surely it’s worth setting up your financial future?”

“I don’t really care about my financial future,” I said, shaking my head. “What I care about is the well-being of the people I care about. And the first thing on their list is making sure they grow a business that we all love.”

“So you didn’t come here today to hash anything out?” said Esther, looking disappointed.

“No, I didn’t. What I can here today to do was to see if I could tempt you away from EHS,” I said boldly. “And to see if you’ll come work for Goblin Girl Maid Service.”

Esther looked like she just swallowed a watermelon whole. “Excuse me?”

“We’d like to recruit you,” I said, speaking off the cuff. “And help you get back to your roots in a small company where you can actually make a

difference. Where you have something that you can really be proud of."

Esther looked about as speechless as I felt. Hearing the words come out of my mouth wasn't something that I'd practiced. If anything, it was a gut decision that I made after seeing her wall of fame right next to me.

It was a Hail Mary play for sure, but then again, we needed anything we could get right now.

"You've got to be joking," said Esther, shaking her head as she leaned forward in her chair. "What makes you think I would come work for you?"

I thumbed my finger at the wall. "Because I know you, Esther. Okay, maybe I don't know *you*, but I know what's important to you. And that's feeling like you're making a difference in your life. I look at this wall and all these pictures and plaques, and none of them are from working at EHS. All of them came from a time before you started here. Do you know what that tells me about you?"

Esther didn't say a word. She was still waiting for me to give my answer.

"That this large corporation isn't the right fit for you," I said. "And it's never going to be. But working at GGMS might be just what you need. And it would give you memories like those that are already on your wall."

Esther scoffed. "I couldn't come to work for GGMS."

"Why not?"

"Why not?" she repeated, throwing her arms in the air. "Well, for one, I'm the lead on this lawsuit against GGMS. It might have Veronika's name on the top, but I'm the one doing the work. I couldn't leave her high and dry."

That answer pleased me if only for a small reason. That reason was that she had no serious objections to joining us and no personal quarrels with myself or Paulina. The first and most important barrier to leaving was what Veronika would think of her, and that to me was an encouraging thought.

"What else?" I asked. "What if I could make the Veronika problem go away? If you come to work for us, you won't need to worry about what Veronika thinks about you."

Esther snorted. “Yeah, until she sues you out of existence and then I don’t have a job anymore. Not very smart of me, is it?”

“Good people usually land on their feet,” I said. “I have no doubt that you’d find a way to make it work. And you’re assuming we’re already under, which we’re not. Besides, I bet if you’re really honest with yourself, this isn’t what you want to be doing. Is helping EHS dominate the city really going to make you feel good about yourself? Is cashing the checks of dirty money going to help you sleep at night? You’re better than that, Esther. And I bet the girls who used to work for you would agree.”

Esther started to shake her head. “I wouldn’t know. My old maids won’t talk to me anymore. Ever since I ‘sold out’ they won’t even acknowledge my existence. I can’t say I blame them though. I left all of them without a job.”

“We always have a need for more maids,” I said. “If you come over, we’ll give priority to your former maids. You get to right two wrongs at once. There’s no better opportunity than that, right?”

I felt like I almost had her. If I was fishing, she’d be wiggling at the bottom of my boat, almost ready for the trophy picture.

Unfortunately, Esther wasn’t going to be caught that easily. And just like some fish do, she wiggled so hard that she went right over the side and back into the water.

“I don’t know what you thought my answer was going to be,” said Esther firmly. “But I’ve chosen this course, and I’m going to see it through. I might be upset about my maids, but you’re wrong about me. I like the money I get from EHS a little too much.”

“For now,” I said. “One day though, that’s going to feel very hollow. And in hindsight, the friendships you discarded along the way are going to seem more important. What are you going to do if they don’t take you back?”

The smirk dropped from her face. “Then I’ll get more friends,” she said after a quiet moment. “And I’ll have enough money that I can buy some, especially after I put GGMS out of business.”

Esther had hardened against me, and my window of opportunity had completely vanished. I knew nothing more was going to come from this, especially when she crossed her arms in front of her chest.

“It’s time to go,” she said finally, jerking her head toward the door. “I’ll see you in court in a few days. And if you decide you want to accept the offer before that date, call me. I might still hold some sway with Veronika.”

“The fact that you’re still trying to help steer us toward the least painful option tells me you’re not as bitchy as you like to present,” I said, standing up and tapping my knuckles against her desk. “I’m not going to give up on you yet, Esther. I know you have a heart in there.”

The look she gave me was hollow and full of disappointment. “I lost my heart a long time ago, Kevin. Now get out.”

Chapter Sixteen

"JUST LIKE THAT? She told you to get out and that's it?"

Lauren winced as I recounted the story of my visit to Esther the day before yesterday. It was already well past dark, and the two of us were relaxing in the hot tub.

I was honestly surprised that Lauren showed up tonight. I knew she was working her tail off preparing for our day in court, and she'd missed the last two dinners at our house. I had insisted that she come over for dinner tonight, and I could tell by the look in her eyes that she hadn't been getting much sleep.

"I suppose I shouldn't have expected much," I said, looking at my pruny hands above the water. "Esther has a reputation of being pretty nasty. I don't know. Maybe it was naive of me to think that I could get her to turn it around out of the blue."

"Naive?" repeated Lauren. "Maybe. But you'll never know if you don't try. And we needed something to help make this case ironclad. We *still* need something honestly."

I knew that Lauren was running herself ragged, and we still didn't have our ace in the hole in regards to winning this case. I didn't think that the jury would rule against us on the flimsy violation of the city code, but I also didn't think we had enough to prove our case so we could get damages.

"Either way, I don't feel like it helped anything, even if it didn't hurt," I said.

Lauren gave me a sympathetic smile. "You know I'm usually not this stressed when it comes to cases?"

"I would hope not," I said jokingly. "The tough Lauren Hammerthorne doesn't get stressed out. She just nails her victims to crosses before taking all their money."

She laughed softly. "That's not too far off. But mostly it's because of me. I tend not to take cases that aren't a slam dunk. And this is far from it. It's probably why I'm so nervous about it. It could easily go either way."

“If we lose, I apologize in advance for messing with your stats,” I said.

Lauren waved her hand. “I’ve learned that having good stats isn’t everything to being a lawyer. Sometimes, it’s just about doing the right thing.”

“You sound like me when I was in Esther’s office,” I said dryly. “All the good that did me.”

I didn’t expect her to reach across the water. Her hand landed on my leg.

“It’s true though. And I have you to thank for showing me that. Esther might not be able to see it, but I do. I think that’s why I’m so worried about this case. It’s personal to me.”

I appreciated what she was trying to do. We hadn’t lost . . . yet, and I knew I needed to keep a positive attitude.

I was also grateful to have Lauren’s help. The stunning kitsune in the very tight swimsuit that was sitting across from me was a far cry from the bitchy lawyer I met several weeks ago.

“Thanks,” I said finally. “Sorry for going down in the gutter there.”

“Some people just can’t be saved, Kevin,” she said. “But it’s not your fault for trying.”

I didn’t say anything to that beyond nodding. When I didn’t respond, I saw a confident look appear on Lauren’s face.

“Besides, it’s just going to have to be up to me and my sharp tongue,” she said. “And you still haven’t seen me run the show in the courtroom.”

“Now that’s a scary thought,” I teased. “Paulina and I couldn’t handle you just in your office during our introduction. I can only imagine what you’re like when you’re trying a case.”

“Let’s just say that Hammerthorne isn’t just my last name,” she said, mimicking the swinging of a hammer. “It’s what I do. And I’m *damn* good at it. I’m going to be trying to make those bitches cry.”

“Now that I’d given money to see,” I said. “Just not thirty million opals.”

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen a fairy cry,” said Lauren, tapping her chin. “It would be a novel experience though. What do you think happens when a

fairy cries?”

“Hopefully a dwarf lady loses her beard,” I said, making Lauren giggle. She touched my leg again, though this time her touch lingered just a second longer than usual before she pulled it back.

“If I could make both of them cry before the end of this, I’ll consider it the highlight of my career,” said Lauren. “Just for the hardship they’ve brought to my friends.”

“How does that word taste coming out of your mouth?” I asked. “Good? Because it sounds good from my end too.”

Her smile was magnificent. “You have no idea. I can’t remember how long it’s been since I’ve had real friends. Friends with an S, as in more than one. If only those kids from law school could see me now.”

“Oh, you can’t tell me you got made fun of in school. Someone like you? With so much going for yourself? I don’t believe it.”

Lauren pursed her lips. “Yeah, but that’s kinda how it was. It was another lonely point in my life, where I just felt like I didn’t have anyone. People can be cruel, but then again, I might have brought some of my trouble on myself.”

I could read between the lines with that statement. I had no doubt that Lauren, with her sharp tongue, could have unintentionally made a few situations worse, especially when it came to immature kids doing what they did best.

A lot of people wore their battle scars of those encounters publicly. Lauren had the same scars—they were just hidden under the surface.

“Do you have any good memories from your schooling days?” I asked. “It wasn’t all bad, right?”

As she thought about it, she started to nod. “Yeah, it wasn’t all bad. I liked a lot of my classes. I had some professors that liked me, mostly because not having a social life meant that I studied more often than the average student. I even had a boyfriend for all of two weeks during junior year. That was before I scared him away.”

“Do I even want to know?” I asked, wincing.

Lauren shrugged as she looked down at her top. Using her fingers, she tried to pull some kind of dirt or a bug or something off the material. In the process though, all she did was draw my attention to her chest, which looked like it wanted to burst out of the tight material.

“Probably not,” she said. “It wasn’t exactly my best moment. Mostly because we were totally wrong for each other. My mom even said as much. I can still hear her voice to this day. ‘It’s not like you were going to wrap tails with him anyway!’”

“Wrap tails?” I asked. “What does that mean?”

Lauren blushed a deep red color. Suddenly, her tail popped out of the water. “I forget that not everyone grew up here. How much do you know about kitsune girls?”

“Only that which I’ve learned from talking to you,” I said. “So barely anything.”

“Well, relationships for the kitsune are more serious than what they would be for most creatures,” explained Lauren. “Take goblins for example. Goblin girls bond very easily because they have a lot of traits that many different partners find desirable.”

“I can absolutely agree with that,” I said, thinking about all the goblin girls in the house.

“Kitsune are a little different,” said Lauren. “We don’t bond as easily. It can take us time to really get to know someone. There’s no such thing as love at first sight within our community. Love is built upon through time. It’s continually worked on.”

“So there’s really no equivalent to Kennedi on the kitsune side?” I said jokingly.

Lauren smiled. “Exactly. A kitsune would never jump into bed on the first date. It’s just not who we are. However, it’s not like that’s a bad thing. The difference is that once we do have that connection, we’re more than willing to form a long-term connection. And the perfect symbolization of that long-term connection is something called wrapping tails.”

Lauren held her hand out in the water, letting her tail wrap around her wrist. “Our tails are part of our identity. No two tails on any kitsune are identical. Each one is different in terms of hair color, pattern, length, etc. When a kitsune finds someone they are willing to invest in long-term, they wrap their tail around that partner.”

“Now, it could be around the wrist like I’m doing right now, which indicates the lowest level of commitment—basically commitment for now but not necessarily a forever commitment. Close friends would do that to each other too, as it does have a platonic meaning to it as well. Or, the wrapping could be around the legs, which is typically done during sexual congress, but there are many who think that this kind of wrapping on its own is pretty shallow. Some would say it’s even more shallow than wrapping around the wrist. And then there’s the last one.”

“What’s the last one?” I asked.

Lauren’s expression turned wistful. “When the tail wraps around another’s waist. When a kitsune wraps her tail around your waist, it’s the most powerful expression of love she can give. It symbolizes total commitment to a partner that she deems her forever partner. Someone who understands her on a level that nobody else does. In some communities, they even have that as part of the wedding—both kitsune wrap their tails around the waist of their partners in front of everyone they know. It’s the ultimate expression of love.”

“That’s really beautiful,” I said. “I had no idea you had that kind of tradition.”

Lauren started stroking her brown hair. “It’s really meant to be a strong gesture. And it’s one I’ve never experienced, not even during those two weeks. Not to say a bond isn’t possible for kitsune in two weeks, but I really wasn’t there with that guy. One day, I hope that I’ll be able to. They say a kitsune isn’t completed as a person until they can wrap their tail around a partner.”

Lauren released her wrist at that moment, letting her tail sink below the water. It seemed a shame to me that someone like her hadn’t experienced that kind of love before. I was having a great time with her, and that had nothing to do with her just being our lawyer.

The more I saw of her personality, the more I liked it.

“I’m sure you will get that experience someday,” I said confidently. “Because you have so much to offer someone.”

“You’re talking about once you disregard my prickly personality, right?”

“Your defense mechanism, you mean?” I said, raising an eyebrow.

Lauren turned a little red. “Okay, point taken. But the point still stands.”

“Well, am I past your defense mechanism yet? Have you let me in?”

“I’ve let you in further than most,” said Lauren. “More than anyone else in years.” She lowered her eyelashes as she said that, and I could tell she was breathing more heavily than she was before.

“What’s so special about me?” I asked, feeling like we were going down an interesting path.

She shrugged. “Besides not taking my bullshit and calling me out on it right away? You were willing to go so far to let me in when you didn’t have to. At first I questioned what kind of guy would be able to live in a house with six women and keep them all happy. And now I know. Everything here is symbiotic. They need you just as much as you need them.”

“That’s a very good way of putting it,” I said.

“What can I say,” said Lauren, cocking her finger at me like it was a gun. “I’m good at what I do.”

We shared a laugh at that, which helped to break some of the tension I was feeling. It was a good place to stop, and it allowed us to talk about some lighter topics, including following up on a favor that I’d asked Lauren the other day.

“Oh, before I forget to tell you,” said Lauren. “I found that woman you had me look for. The aging hippie one?”

“Blossom!” I said, with excitement in my voice. “How did you find her? We had the hardest time after she moved. It was like she dropped off the grid.”

“Yeah, she was challenging to find,” said Lauren. “But the usual tricks tend to work when the obvious stuff fails. I couldn’t find any current listings for her, but I could find listings for her brother.”

“She has a brother?” I asked. “I didn’t know that. How’d you find out?”

“When you search a name online, you often can bring up those that are related to that person,” said Lauren. “When I saw people that shared her last name, I started digging until I found her brother. And he let me know where she moved. I have a current address that I’ll pass over to you once we get out of the tub.”

“That’s amazing news!” I said. “I want to go see her. If we can reunite her with Greta and Andy, that will solve one of my ongoing problems.”

“I’m happy to have gotten some kind of win for you,” said Lauren. “Makes me feel worthwhile.”

“Don’t worry. I know we’ll get a win of our own soon too.”

We didn’t stay in the tub for much longer after that. Lauren had to get back, and after we both dressed again, we walked to the door.

“Thanks for having me over again,” she said, lingering once the door was open.

“How many times do I have to tell you?” I said. “You don’t need to say thank you. Thank me by coming back tomorrow.”

She giggled. “Count on it. I wouldn’t miss lasagna night for anything in the world.”

“That’s a wise decision,” I said. “Besides, Sadie is making two of them so we’ll have plenty to eat. Plus garlic bread. The real stuff, not the frozen kind.”

I felt like I could hear her stomach growl. “I’m so in.”

I didn’t expect what happened next. I’d walked Lauren to the door many times by this point, and they usually progressed the same way—we said our goodbyes and she was on her way.

Tonight though, something else happened. Before she could leave, Lauren turned to face me again and leaned in until her lips connected with mine.

It was just a peck at first. Lauren pulled away only slightly and opened her eyes. We held that position for several tense seconds until we closed the distance once more.

This next kiss was more deliberate, more emotional than the first. I really felt her lips melting against mine, with just enough wetness to really make the experience enjoyable. Being this close to her, I took in her natural scent, which reminded me so much of vanilla that I could only want more.

Just like the first one, the second kiss ended too soon. And I could tell by the look on her face that she was embarrassed about what had happened.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered, pulling away and buttoning her coat.

“Don’t be,” I said, even though I could still taste her on my lips. “Nothing wrong with that, right?”

“You’re sure about that?” she asked. “I don’t have a lot of experience in that department.”

“Trust me,” I said. “If I didn’t want that to happen, I’d let you know.”

A begrudging smile appeared on her face. “Good to know. Goodnight, Kevin.”

“Goodnight, Lauren.”

I watched the pretty kitsune as she walked away, her tail swishing from side to side as she walked. I don’t know if it was just my imagination, but it seemed like she was happy, at least from the movement in her tail. I wondered whether something new had just started.

Sometimes all it took was just a simple kiss.

It was a memorable kiss though. I could still feel the wetness against my lips even into the night, when I was laying in bed with Paulina. I could even get a hint of vanilla every once in a while, though I didn’t know if it was just my brain wishing that Lauren was that close again.

Either way, I was pleasantly distracted. Enough so that Paulina noticed.

By this point, she was so pregnant that she could only sleep on her side, so she craned her head to look back at me while we spooned.

“So did our lawyer tell you something you didn’t want to hear tonight?” she asked. “You seem so distracted.”

“More of the same actually,” I said. “Nothing new, except she did manage to locate Blossom for us. So that’s one positive bit of news.”

“Oh, that’s nice! Kennedi will be thrilled to hear that.”

“Thrilled enough to bake us all cookies,” I said. “Fingers crossed that they’ll be zander nut cookies.”

Paulina moaned. “I could eat two whole trays of cookies just for myself. I feel so fat and ugly and gross. But I’m hungry all the time now.”

“You’re not fat, ugly, or gross,” I said, kissing her shoulder. “Trust me on that.”

“I’ll take your word for it,” she said. “By the way, I’ve been meaning to talk to you about something.”

“Oh? What’s that?”

She gave me a funny look. “I kinda want to take a step back from my duties. My maid duties that is. Not the business, but doing any shifts. With me being so pregnant, it’s just becoming a lot harder to do that kind of stuff.”

“I don’t think you’ll hear any arguments from anyone,” I said. “We’re all thinking about it anyway. You don’t need to be taking shifts anymore. Not when you have the whole company to run, let alone being this far along in your pregnancy.”

“Well, it’s not entirely about the pregnancy,” admitted Paulina. “With so little work going around, I feel a little guilty about taking shifts when they could go to someone else.”

To be honest, that thought had occurred to me too. Things were now desperate enough that having six full-time maids was too much. We had enough work for four full-time right now, with Paulina only doing half the normal shifts since she was running the company, and with one of the other girls switching off by the week on who received the part-time shifts.

With Paulina out of the rotation, it would help the situation a little, but it wasn’t a long-term solution.

We really just needed more work.

“We’ll get back to where we are growing again soon,” I told her, pulling her closer to me.

Paulina let out a deep sigh. “I really hope so.”

Chapter Seventeen

With Paulina truly pulling back from the maid side of the business to focus on the administrative tasks of running the company, it made things a little easier over the next couple days. We were able to redistribute the workload so that all the remaining girls got the same amount, which meant no one was left with too few jobs.

It was a short-term compromise, but it kept us going until we were able to have our day in court.

The day before that happened, we were still not in the position where victory was assured. Lauren had assured me that she was going to give the performance of her career, and I didn't doubt her abilities whatsoever.

I just would have felt better if we had that ace in the hole.

I kept trying to think about last-minute fixes or ways that I could turn the tables on EHS. I still hadn't given up on my idea about turning Esther, but when I reached out again the morning before the trial, she refused to even talk to me.

"I have nothing to say to you," she snapped on the phone, right after I said hello. "Everything you need to hear from me, you'll hear tomorrow."

"Please Esther, just listen to me for a moment," I said, but it was too late.

She'd already hung up.

It was while I was staring at my phone that something hit me. It was a new version of an old idea, but something that Lauren had told me the last time I saw her manifested in a new way. It was worth a shot though, and it manifested two separate visits to two very different women.

The first of those women was Blossom. I could tell she didn't remember me from signing the papers to take over the office space, but that didn't stop her from inviting me in and listening to what I had to say.

The second was to someone I hadn't seen in months. That meeting was a little more touch-and-go, but in the end, it needed to be done.

I just hoped that it would be enough to save the company.

On the morning of the trial, we all got to the courthouse wearing our best clothes.

“I still don’t understand why I need to be wearing stockings and this damn blazer,” muttered Nikki, who was the most irritated about having to wear something formal. “This is so not me. Malfiore prefers her servants, I mean *his* servants, to dress casually.”

“Today is not about Malfiore,” said Paulina, brushing some dust off the shoulder of Nikki’s blazer. “Today is about Goblin Girl Maid Service, and I’m determined that we’re all going to look our best. The company deserves no less.”

When put that way, Nikki didn’t have anything else to say. I could tell she still wasn’t happy about it, but she tolerated it nonetheless.

“Personally, I kinda like this satin blouse and pencil skirt,” said Kennedi brightly. “It gives me a great idea for a stripper routine that I can use on the pole in my room!”

She promptly grabbed the edges of her blazer, wiggling them around as she danced while singing a bit from the song, “9 to 5.”

“So much raw talent,” said Bridgette wistfully. “She would have made so much money at my old place.”

Kennedi grinned. “That is definitely true. But I don’t need any more money. What I need is my family and the love of a good, big-cocked stud like Kevin.”

“Sometimes I think all I am to you is just a cock with legs,” I said, fixing my tie outside the courtroom.

Kennedi blew a raspberry. “Don’t be ridiculous. You’re so much more than a cock with legs. Could a cock with legs take care of the hot tub like you do?”

“Kennedi!” snapped Sadie. “Insensitive!”

“I’m only teasing,” said the purple-haired goblin girl as she wrapped her arms around my neck. “He knows that he’s my one and only. Right, baby?”

I answered her by smacking her ass, which made her eyes come alive with fire. In any other situation, I would have loved to explore that, but when the doors to the courtroom opened, we were beckoned inside to take our seats.

It was like any other courtroom that I might have found in my old life. There was a small section for seating in the back of the court which was separated from the front by a small wooden gate. Once you were through the gate, there were two tables, one on the left for the plaintiff, which in this case would be EHS. That table was occupied by Veronika and Esther, both of whom looked very out of place. Veronika for one looked to be wearing a business suit that was several decades out of style judging by the color and the thread. For Esther’s part, she had a look on her face as sour as if she’d just drank spoiled milk.

There was someone else at the table that looked to be their lawyer, a bloated-looking troll with a badly-placed boil right on the center of his nose. Together, they made up ugly table of plaintiffs, but I knew I was definitely biased in favor of our girls.

On the other side was an identical table for the defendants, which in this case were occupied by myself, Paulina, and Lauren. The other girls waited behind the wooden gate, sitting in the front row directly behind us for moral support.

One thing that confused me right from the start was that I saw no section for a jury. Instead, I saw five seats in front of us on a raised platform, which I guessed was for that many judges.

I leaned closer to Lauren. “No jury on these cases? And why are there five seats up there instead of one?”

She smiled at me. “It’s not like how you see on tv shows, Kevin. In Dragonmont City, the judge sits with the jury on either side of her. It’s a jury of four, and if they deadlock, then she’s the deciding vote.”

“That’s an interesting way to look at it,” I muttered, realizing that my limited exposure to *Law and Order* was probably going to be useless here.

“Don’t worry about a thing,” she said. “After opening statements, EHS is going to get a chance to prove their case. Once they’ve done that, I’ll have a chance to question them as well as bring up our evidence. Depending on how long it goes, we’ll probably get one recess and hopefully get a ruling that benefits us before the end of the day. I got this.”

I was grateful for her confidence, and I realized now was the time to see the shark that I’d been hearing about. I was also looking forward to seeing the smirk wiped off Veronika’s face. I could tell she thought this was a done deal, and I really wanted to see what she would do once Lauren jumped her ass.

I just hoped that it would be enough.

When the judge arrived, I wasn’t surprised to see that she was a fairy. She was rather unassuming except for one major factor in that her hair wasn’t the golden color that most fairies had but it had been dyed pink instead.

“Isn’t our judge’s hair so cute?” whispered Kennedi, leaning across the wooden gate to talk to me. “Do you think I would look good with pink hair?”

“I think you’d look good with any color of hair,” I replied.

Kennedi gave me one of those oh-you looks. “Great answer,” she whispered before sitting back down.

“This is good for us,” said Lauren, gesturing to the judge. “She’s been on my cases before. Judge Fairchild is really good at what she does. And she usually doesn’t convict unless the case is ironclad. Although . . .”

“You’re really leaving me hanging here,” I said. “Although what?”

Lauren winced. “It doesn’t exactly bode well for our countersuit. She’s probably not going to like our evidence.”

That figured, but there wasn’t anything we could do about it now. The judge took her seat, and she was soon followed by a jury of one other fairy, one goblin, one troll, and one orc, representing most of the fantasy races of Dragonmont City. The jury was selected at random, so they were all new faces to us.

Once everyone was seated, the case officially began. From that moment on, it was a great example of the monotony of trials, which meant that it was full of several tense, interesting moments separated by many long, boring sequences.

The first of the many boring sequences came from the opening. Judge Fairchild introduced herself and the details of the case itself, and the jurors had the chance to do the same. From that point, the trial moved to opening statements.

EHS had the chance to go first, detailing their company and its history and ending with the reason why they were there.

“It is for that matter that we find ourselves in this courtroom today,” said the stuffy troll lawyer, who didn’t seem too quick on the uptake. “We’re here because the defendants have violated city code, and in the process they have cost EHS millions of opals from lost business. And we can prove it.”

“Very well,” replied Judge Fairchild as she then pivoted to us. “Now let’s hear from our defendants.”

From that moment on, I saw my friend Lauren, who was remarkably tactful and thoughtful, change into Lauren Hammerthorne—badass lawyer extraordinaire.

“Ladies and gentlemen, my clients today are the victims of a coordinated and vile campaign of slander and defamation that has brought their honest business to the brink of financial ruin,” said Lauren, starting off very strong. “Goblin Girl Maid Service is a true success story that anyone could envy. Started by two strong-willed and passionate women, it’s turned into the premier maid service company in the entire city. It’s become so strong that it’s attracted the attention of the largest corporate conglomerate in the city, a group of vultures determined to remove all rivals and consolidate the city’s maid services into one predatory monopoly. This I will not stand for.”

“She’s really good,” I whispered to Paulina, watching as every eye in that room was centered on Lauren.

“I take back what I said about her on that first day,” replied Paulina. “She’s everything we need right now and more.”

I couldn’t have agreed more, especially as Lauren painted the situation in front of us. Now wasn’t the time to go into detail, but by the time she was done speaking, she’d done a great job of casting us in the light of the little guy that was trying to be run over by the corporate giant.

“You rocked that!” I told Lauren once she sat down again.

She let out a loud exhale and smiled. “I really love being in front of everyone like that. The rush is so intense. Sometimes I swear it’s better than sex. Well, what I’ve heard sex is like.”

“Hopefully the jury is already on our side,” I said. “They look sympathetic to us.”

“Yeah, but we just started,” said Lauren. “They’ll go back and forth as the trial progresses. We just need to hope we can make a strong enough case. Especially in this beginning part with EHS getting the chance to prove why we’re guilty.”

“*Try* to prove why we’re guilty,” Paulina said, emphasizing the first part.

Lauren gave her a long look. “It won’t take much on their part. Just watch.”

Sure enough, Lauren was right on the money, almost depressingly so. EHS’ lawyer kicked off their segment by showcasing a copy of our rating from the city, as well as the date of which it was obtained. The troll then went into a detailed list of our current customers, as well as the date we started servicing their accounts. The entire list was obtained via a subpoena, which made it all too easy to point out that more than half our customers started working with us before we had our official rating.

“And with that, I bring back the penalty clause under the city’s business code,” said the troll, fumbling with another set of papers on his desk. “By taking the majority of their customers without a rating from the city, Goblin Girl Maid Service is in violation of the city code and risks a maximum punishment of one million opals. In addition, many of their old customers were obtained at EHS’ expense, which ended up being a loss for

our company. The facts on this case are indisputable, but we welcome any attempt by GGMS to contest our findings."

The last part of that statement was said with so much dripping sarcasm that it made Veronika chuckle. I glanced over at Lauren to see if she registered it, but I could tell she was preparing to start the big show.

"Ladies and gentleman, the fact of the matter is that EHS would love for you to believe that my clients are none other than common swindlers who routinely violate city code for personal gain. They would love nothing more than to bury my clients with frivolous lawsuits if that means they can buy out the last company of any competition to them remaining in the city. But the truth of the matter is that their case is as empty as the head of their own lawyer."

"Uh, objection!" said the troll lawyer, sticking his finger in the air after figuring out he'd just been insulted.

"Sustained," said Judge Fairchild, looking down her nose at Lauren. "Just stick to the facts, Miss Hammerthorne. No insults."

"I thought I was keeping to the facts, your honor," said Lauren sweetly, putting her arms together. Before anyone else could say a word, Lauren produced several sheets of paper and turned on the projector inside the room.

"I cannot dispute that the city code indeed carries a reference to businesses only operating if they have a rating from the city," said Lauren. "But it's also important to point out that the city code is incredibly old and out of date, and they are riddled with ridiculous laws that people find themselves in violation of every single day. For instance."

Lauren placed a sheet of paper on the project, which immediately caused some snickers from the people in the crowd.

"Would it surprise anyone in the court that the city codes prohibit anyone from kissing in public?" asked Lauren. "I know it certainly surprises me, considering I see couples out in public all the time, most of whom are doing more than just kissing. But according to the city code, that is illegal."

Lauren placed another piece of paper on the project. “Would it also surprise you to know that it’s illegal to go fishing on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays while wearing rain boots? I don’t know what the writer of this law had against rain boots, or those days in particular, but it’s part of the city code. Did you also know it’s illegal in the city to have cats? Or to worship demons? I certainly hope no one tells the dark elves that they are all in violation of the law.”

Predictably, I saw Nikki sink into her chair a few inches as soon as that was said. I couldn’t help but smile when that happened.

“It’s also illegal to share your Gobboflix password,” continued Lauren. “I know I myself am in violation of that, as are many of the others in the room.”

“Fucking right!” said Kennedi, just a little too loudly. It caused most of the room to stare at her until she too sank into her chair.

“The point I’m trying to make is that the city code ought not to be considered truly laws, but guidelines,” said Lauren. “Many of which are simply out of date or don’t apply to our city in the time that we’re living in.” She then held up an entire stack of paper. “In fact, I bet you if we went through this entire stack, we would all find that we violate the city code on a daily basis. And I don’t know about you, but I would consider it a grievous waste of court resources if we started trying every citizen inside the city for frivolous offenses.”

“Furthermore,” said Lauren, before anyone else could speak up. “The city code was originally put in place for one reason—to help protect the liberties and ensure the safety of our people. And in that charge, I have nothing but commendation for Goblin Girl Maid Service, a company who has built themselves up on their service to their clients. It’s a company that has consistently expanded by providing the very best to the people they serve. And in doing so, when they did get a rating, the rating they obtained was A++. Surely, these are not the predatory business owners that the code is trying to protect others from.”

“That doesn’t matter!” snapped Veronika, standing up in her chair and pointing her finger at Lauren. “You still broke the code. You broke the law!”

“The only thing being broken in this courtroom are the laws of fashion,” said Lauren sharply. “Especially when you consider that dumpy outfit you have on.”

“I’ll show you dumpy, bitch!”

Veronika tried to scramble across the table, but she was restrained before that could happen. It added some healthy excitement to the room, and I could tell from one look at Lauren’s face that she was really enjoying how this was going.

“Ladies, I’m only going to ask you this once!” snapped the judge. “Be civil to each other. Now, Miss Hammerthorne, you may proceed.”

“Thank you, your honor,” said Lauren smugly. She then raised another file in her hand, holding it so the entire room could see it. It was by far the thickest yet, bulging as she struggled to hold it with one hand. “I wouldn’t ask the jury to judge Goblin Girl Maid Service just on my own statements. In fact, I would invite you to allow their customers to do that for you. Inside this file, I have sworn statements from every current customer that uses GGMS today. I would go through every one of them, but in the interest of saving us all the time and trouble, I’ll boil it down to one simple message—their clients love them. They offer a premier service at a fair price, which cannot be obtained anywhere else in the city.”

“In fact, that is entirely the point of why we’re countersuing,” said Lauren. “It’s not because GGMS is made up of rule-breaking criminals but instead because they are so damned good at what they do that they attracted the attention of the only faceless corporation in the city that was capable of trying to run them out of town!”

“Objection, your honor!” said the troll lawyer. “We’re not a faceless corporation!”

“We only *wish* you were faceless,” said Lauren sweetly. “To save us all the trouble.”

“Sustained,” said Judge Fairchild. “Miss Hammerthorne, you have evidence of that charge, I presume?”

“I’d be more than happy to run you through the evidence, your honor,” said Lauren. “When my client rejected all of the offers that EHS made to

purchase them, and when I say all of the offers, I really mean *all* of the offers, they became a target of a coordinated harassment campaign with links to a shadowy group with lots of resources at their disposal. Almost as many resources as a large mega corporation."

After suffering one more objection from the EHS lawyer, Lauren started to take a deep dive on everything that we'd suffered since the rejection of the last offer. She told them about the egging, as well as what we found out from the camera footage. She also told them about the review bombs, including the way they were done behind VPNs which was an anomaly based on the forum's current user base.

"In summation, I can understand why someone attempted to purchase GGMS," said Lauren, as she wrapped up. "They're a lovely bunch of people who are running an outstanding business. But that kind of thing doesn't matter to those corporate conglomerates who only seek to monopolize their industries while they reap all the profits. I think you'll be able to draw your own conclusion based on the evidence presented here today. Who else but EHS would have the resources and the motivation to take out the only company worthy of their attention in the city? Why are we even here today? On the flimsiest pretense that I've seen in my entire career? Why? To make GGMS spend their time and money fighting for their lives so that it makes them an easier target to acquire. That's why if you look in your hearts, I know you'll see who is truly right and wrong today."

With that, Lauren didn't say another word. The only thing I could hear was the sound of her high heels clicking across the floor. When she sat down, she grabbed her glass of water and downed it in a single gulp.

It rattled when it hit the table. I saw her shoot a sideways glare at the troll lawyer on the other side.

"Stick that in your pipe and *smoke* it," she said just loud enough for me to hear.

"A very interesting account of events," said Judge Fairchild, after a moment of silence. "But unfortunately, after reviewing the case, I'm a little perturbed by the lack of proof on the side of the defense."

Hearing those two sentences was like a knife right to the heart. Any goodwill that I felt we'd earned, any positivity from watching Lauren kick ass right now, seemed to disappear.

"This isn't a kangaroo court," said the judge, looking down her long nose at us. "And accusations have to be proven. So far, I've seen nothing to suggest that EHS was in the wrong for what happened to you. Is it unfortunate? Of course, but I don't see how EHS is to blame."

Just when I thought things could get no worse, the judge rounded on the EHS team. "As for the plaintiffs, I share Miss Hammerthorne's concerns about frivolity in my courtroom. If we're to cite everyone for all the minor violations of the city code, I'd never be able to get any sleep. This company is clearly doing more good than harm, so I question our reason for being here."

"Because they broke the code, your honor," said the troll lawyer suddenly.

"Idiot," whispered Lauren, shaking her head.

"I get that," said Judge Fairchild, her eyes going wide. "But so far, I'm underwhelmed. I think it's a good idea for us to take a recess right now. And I'd implore each side to come up with something more substantial so we don't end up wasting any more time. Dismissed."

Chapter Eighteen

IT WAS with a somber mood that we left the courtroom for the first time that morning.

I was stiff from sitting in the same chair all morning, but nothing matched the feeling of helplessness as we all congregated around Lauren outside the courtroom.

Kennedi was the first to break the silence. “So . . . did we win?”

“Not even close,” said Lauren, shaking her head. “On the plus side, EHS is no closer to winning their portion, so I guess there’s that. But we can’t prove anything, so I think once this recess is over, the judge is going to throw out the case.”

“Which is exactly what we don’t want,” said Cassidy. “Because if she throws it out, we don’t get any damages from EHS’ attack, and they are free to find something else to try to sue us for next?”

“Exactly,” said Lauren. “Which, knowing them, they will definitely find something.”

“Do we have any last plays?” I asked. “Anyone we could call? Does anyone owe us any favors?”

“I already called the mayor this morning,” said Paulina quietly. “He put in a good word for us, but I doubt it will help after what we just heard. We’re lacking in powerful friends it seems. Oh, wow!”

I saw Paulina bend her knees as her hands went to her stomach. Instantly, my arms were around her, making sure she didn’t fall. Cassidy did the same on her other side, until it became obvious that the moment had passed.

“Are you okay?” I asked her.

Paulina nodded as she stood up straight. “Sorry. False labor pain. I’m good now.”

“False labor pain?” repeated Bridgette. “Are you sure you’re okay?”

“Yeah, I think this baby is going to come soon,” said Paulina, crossing her fingers. “Hopefully we can get through the rest of the trial and win first!”

“Not from what Lauren is saying,” said Nikki. “It sounds like we don’t have a snowball’s chance in hell.”

I saw Lauren’s shoulders slump forward just a little. “We’ll do the best we can, but even if we just get this case thrown out, I’m not going to be happy about it. EHS isn’t going to learn their lesson from this. I’m guessing that right now they’re talking about what lawsuit to lay at our feet next.”

Indeed, it looked like something was happening over there. Veronika didn’t look happy at all, and I could tell Esther was taking the brunt of it, as was the lawyer. At least the lawyer didn’t seem too affected by it, but when Veronika finally stormed off, I could tell Esther was reeling.

I felt for her then. I knew we were on opposing sides, but I truly felt like Esther was playing for the wrong team. I just didn’t know how to get her off the field and into the sidelines.

That is, until we had a special visitor arrive. It was a person that made me smile as soon as I saw her, which was very much the opposite reaction she got from me the first time we met.

I knew Paulina and Kennedi would recognize her too. Sure enough, I felt Kennedi’s hands wrap around my arm.

“Well, fuck me senseless,” whispered Kennedi. “Isn’t that Enid?”

“Holy balls, you’re right,” said Paulina. “I haven’t seen her since we won back Mrs. Pennington!”

Sure enough, it was Esther’s old partner-in-crime. Enid has been part of Esther’s maid company before she sold out to EHS. She was also the second person I visited yesterday, and when she caught my eye, Enid waved at me.

“Did I just see that right?” asked Sadie. “Did she just wave at Kevin?”

Kennedi put a protective arm around my waist. “That bitch better stay away from *my* man!”

“It’s okay,” I said, chuckling. “I asked her to come here. And judging by the looks of it, she has something to say to Esther.”

She had a *lot* of things to say to Esther. Part of me wondered whether there were going to be any fireworks, and I found myself scooting closer until I could overhear the conversation.

“I’m so surprised to see you,” said Esther, playing with her beard. “I tried to reach out to you so many times, but . . . I wasn’t that surprised when you didn’t want to get back to me.”

“I had a long time of holding hate in my heart for what you did,” said Enid, crossing my arms. “We were at the top of our game, and the next day it was all gone. That really stung, Esther. Especially when they took you with them.”

Esther nodded, but I could tell she was on the brink of tears. “You still blame me, don’t you? For what I did?”

Enid took a deep breath. “Yes, I do. But I’m closer to understanding why you did it. I mean, look at you now. This was a huge jump up in your career.”

“A jump that has come with more challenges than rewards,” admitted Esther, which I was surprised to hear. Esther smiled. “Sometimes I feel like getting the old gang back together. I still have a lot of pictures of us in my office.”

“I don’t blame you. We had a great gang.”

“Yeah, we did,” said Esther wistfully.

“But listen, there’s a reason why I came here today,” said Enid. “And that’s to tell you one thing. Well, two things. The first is that I forgive you for what happened. How it all went down. Selling out. *Calling* you a sellout. I don’t know if I would have done anything differently if I were in your shoes.”

“I’m sure you would have,” said Esther. “You told me so much at the time.”

“Yeah, well after thinking it through, I don’t know that I would have,” said Enid. “Either way, I get it. It’s water under the bridge. I got a new job that pays the bills. It’s not what we had, but I’m ready to move on from it. And I’m ready to let go of all this hate that I had for you. It’s not what anyone

would call healthy. So I forgive you. And I'm sorry for all the things I called you."

I was in shock when Esther suddenly threw her arms around the other woman and hugged her. I think Enid was in shock too, because it took her a moment to start patting Esther's back.

"I'm sorry," said Esther, still on the brink of tears. "For how it went down. I'm sorry for not being a good friend to you."

"It's okay," said Enid, pulling back from her. "Really, it's okay. I'll be fine."

"What's the second thing, Enid?" asked Esther. "You said you came here to say two things. What's the second?"

Enid took one look around the room, where the troll lawyer for EHS was still consulting with Veronika.

"I get why you did what you did," said Enid finally. "The money was one thing, but is this who you really want to be, Esther?"

"W-what do you mean?" asked Esther, taking a step back.

"I mean you're suing them just so you can put them out of business," said Enid, pointing over to me. "Listen, I know we had our squabbles with them, but GGMS is more like us than EHS is. Isn't that what we wanted in the beginning? To be the little guy that tried to find a way to win? Is this where you really want to be?"

I could see anger building on Esther's face. "It's not that simple, Enid. Yes, I regret dissolving our company, but this is complicated."

Enid shook her head. "No, it's not. It's not complicated at all. What you're doing today isn't right. It's kinda like burying our company all over again."

"C'mon, Enid, don't do this to me. I can't take this right now."

"I'm not trying to upset you," said Enid. "But I think you really need to think about what you're doing. You've become the very thing you used to rail against when we started out. I understand you wanted there to be career progression, but not like this."

Esther put both her hands up. “I can’t take this right now, Enid. Seriously, you don’t know what you’re asking of me.”

“I do, and all I’m asking you is to be brave enough to admit it to yourself,” said Enid. “You know the right path.”

“It’s not that simple!” yelled Esther, right before pushing past Enid and disappearing. Her yell had been loud enough to attract the attention of Veronika and the lawyer, both of whom approached Enid trying to figure out what happened.

“What did you say to her?” demanded Veronika. “Esther! Esther! Where did you go?”

“I told her what she needed to hear,” said Enid, crossing her arms. She gave me a smile before glancing back at Veronika. “I hope your case crashes and burns, bitch.”

I don’t know if Veronika truly heard her. She was still screaming for Esther, and then she disappeared down the same long hallway that the dwarf did.

“That was certainly entertaining,” said Paulina from my side. “You really went to go see Enid?”

“I figured if there was one person that could talk sense into Esther, it would be her,” I said. “I remembered how influential she was when we competed against Esther the first time. I figured her word would still count for something.”

“I just hope it made a difference,” said Paulina. “But with Esther, you’d never know.”

Paulina had a point. The last time I thought I was getting through to Esther, I watched as her heart started to harden right in front of me. I knew the same thing could happen again, especially if she felt Enid was pushing just a little too hard.

As it turned out, we returned to the chamber after recess only to see that Esther was missing from her spot at the table. I could tell that Veronika was pissed about it too, because she had a cell phone glued to her ear, no doubt trying to find out where Esther went.

Just when I thought it was possible that Esther had disappeared for good, the doors to the chamber opened and Esther appeared, marching along the aisle and through the gate until she could take her rightful spot.

“Where the hell were you?” whispered Veronika loud enough that I could hear it. “Don’t you answer your phone?”

I didn’t hear Esther’s answer, but I still wondered just what she was thinking.

We didn’t have to wait long to find out whether she had a change of heart or not.

“Okay, we’re back in order now,” said Judge Fairchild. “In our first session, I heard a lot of accusations but not a lot of proof. I’m going to send it back to the plaintiff now. Do you have anything further to add to your testimony?”

“Nothing, your honor,” said the troll lawyer. “Nothing at—”

“I have something to say,” said Esther, suddenly standing up and catching the entire room’s attention.

Judge Fairchild raised an eyebrow. “Yes? What do you have to say?”

I felt like I was waiting forever for Esther to respond. When she finally did, she didn’t disappoint.

“Everything that GGMS said about EHS trying to intimidate them into selling the business is true,” said Esther. “And I can prove it.”

The reactions around the room were equal parts surprising and comedic.

“Holy shit,” swore Lauren, barely able to hold back her laughter.

“You stupid bitch!” roared Veronika, flapping her wings angrily as she tried to beat on Esther with her arms. It was so violent that they had to put a security guard at the table just to keep Veronika off of Esther.

Even the judge seemed confused.

“I’m sorry, what was that?” asked Fairchild. “You’re giving a position in support of the *defendant*?”

“They’re absolutely correct,” said Esther. “I was the one that egged their front office.” Esther then turned to face Paulina and I. “I’m so sorry. The bitch made me do it.”

It didn’t take us long to figure out who “the bitch” was when Veronika started foaming at the mouth.

“You liar!” she raged. “I did no such thing!”

“You did, and I still have the emails to prove it,” said Esther. “You ordered me to egg their office, and I did. I also was the one that put our own girls behind a VPN in order to leave terrible reviews on their page.” Esther turned back to Judge Fairchild. “It goes even further than that. We put together special pricing to steal as many of their customers as they could. We even gave extravagant offers to their staff, hoping to lure them away. They were part of a targeted campaign of corruption, and I have enough evidence to support everything I say.”

“Evidence is what this is going to come down to,” said Judge Fairchild. “I’m going to need proof of all of this. Can you produce it, young lady?”

Esther smiled smugly. “I can bring everything down here this afternoon. If we can just have another short recess?”

“Granted,” said Fairchild. “Well, this just got a whole lot more interesting.”

Did it ever. One short recess later and the floodgates had not only just been opened. They were smashed through by the raging torrent that was bearded Esther.

“Copies of all the emails that I have about this,” said Esther, putting a stack of papers in the judge’s hands while it looked like Veronika was about to stroke-out on the courtroom floor. “You were asking for proof just a little bit ago. Here’s all the proof you need.”

Judge Fairchild looked through the entire stack while Lauren, Paulina, and myself sat on the edge of our chairs. I was still in a state of partial disbelief at what was happening, but now as we waited for the result, I could think about nothing else.

“Yes, this certainly paints the entire picture, doesn’t it?” murmured Fairchild, but not before giving several long looks at Veronika. After glancing through the stack herself, Fairchild passed the copies around the rest of the jury—most of whom had visible reactions to seeing the proof right in front of them.

Upon seeing that, I knew our case was as good as made.

In all, it took the jury less than ten minutes to come back with their ruling. I still found myself holding my breath when Judge Fairchild stood up to address the entire room.

“We have a decision, thankfully,” she announced. “In the case of EHS versus GGMS, the jury finds that EHS violated city code by intimidating and harassing their rivals, GGMS, in order to acquire the company outright. This breaks the several statutes of the code. We, the jury, award damages to GGMS in the amount of five million opals, to be collected from EHS in one single lump-sum payment. We also rule that the two companies should forever remain separated.”

By the time the last part came out, I barely heard it. Celebration was the first thing on anyone’s mind on our side, and I found myself in the midst of a large group hug as both Paulina and Lauren crushed into me at the same time.

Glancing over, I could see Veronika throwing a massive fit, even pounding on the chest of the security guard who had been placed there to keep her separated from Esther.

“Hold on, GGMS team,” said Judge Fairchild, giving us her patented glare. “I’m not finished yet. The jury has also found that you were in violation of the code for taking clients without a rating.”

“Oh, fuck,” I heard Paulina mutter right next to me.

“But, seeing that your company has done much more good than harm amongst the people of the city, we’ve decided that your punishment will be largely symbolic,” said Fairchild as her tone softened. “Therefore, we fine GGMS one opal as a consequence of breaking the code. That is all!”

From that moment onward, I really didn’t hear another thing. Kennedi and the rest of the girls poured over the wooden gate and surrounded us,

hugging and in some cases crying at the news we'd just received.

"We did it!" yelled Sadie, colliding into me and throwing her arms around my back. "The company is saved! You saved the company!"

"We really did it," I said, hugging her tight before looking over at Lauren, who was now gathering her things with a smile firmly plastered on her face. I let go of Sadie and approached her, and her smile grew larger when I touched the small of her back.

"You really did it," I said. "You got us the result we so desperately needed. And looking over at Veronika, you did make her cry at the end. Tears of rage, but they're still tears."

Lauren laughed. "I'll take it. I think this was a team effort, but we wouldn't have been here without Esther's help."

At the mention of her name, I glanced over to their side of the courtroom and caught Esther's eyes. I gestured for her to join us on our side. She came warily until she was surrounded by people that at one time she called scabs.

I was the first to extend the olive branch by hugging her. I could feel her beard tickling my shoulder, but in light of the circumstances today, I really didn't care.

"Thank you, Esther," I said. "I can't tell you how much this means to us. Thanks to you, GGMS is saved."

"I'm sorry it took me so long to see the light," said Esther once I pulled away. She put her hand on Paulina's shoulder. "I figured this was the best way for us to bury the past. I take back all those things I've said about you over the years, Paulina. You've put together a great company."

"Well, there's always room for one more," said Paulina. "We could surely use the help of a good maid if you'd be interested?"

"Yeah, I doubt Miss Bitch-tits over there is going to keep your job now," added Kennedi so elegantly.

Esther snorted. "I'm sure of that. Either way, my time with EHS is over. But I think for now, I'm going to pass on GGMS. It's nothing personal, and

I'll keep you in mind. I think I need to figure some things out on my own. I think I need to be just Esther for a while."

"The offer stands if you ever change your mind," said Paulina. "For you and Enid, and any of your girls that still need jobs."

Esther's eyes widened. "Now I think we might be able to make a deal."

Esther got on the phone shortly after. Within twenty minutes, we had two new maids—girls that had been let go from the acquisition by EHS and still wanted to come back to the industry. GGMS would give them a second chance, just like we had received our second chance today.

"I get the impression a lot is happening between those two right now," said Lauren in my ear as we watched Esther and Paulina talk to each other. "They seem like friends now, don't they?"

"That relationship has come a very long way," I said. "I still remember the first time I met Esther. She was more like Veronika than she is right now."

"That's hard to picture," said Lauren, putting a strand of stray hair behind her ear.

She became very quiet for a moment, and I could tell she was struggling with what to say. When she finally came out with it, her heart was in her eyes.

"So the case is won. You got your damages. The future for GGMS seems assured. I guess there's not much of a reason for you to need a lawyer now, right? Now that everything is settled?"

"Not everything is settled," I said coyly. "There's still one more thing that needs to be attended to."

Lauren looked confused. "What's that?"

I didn't give her a real answer. Instead, I pulled her into my arms and kissed her soundly. The kitsune lawyer melted into my embrace, locking lips with me for several seconds until she pulled away while blushing furiously.

"I want you to celebrate with us tonight," I told her breathlessly. "And I want you to do something you haven't done yet."

Her eyes centered on me. “What’s that?”

“I want you to stay the night.”

It was a brazen thing to say, but I didn’t care. As far as I was concerned, Lauren had wormed her way into our family, and now was the time to recognize it. We were soon surrounded by the other girls, no doubt waiting to hear Lauren’s response. When she finally spoke up, it was a surprise to no one.

“I’d love to,” said Lauren, her tail swishing back and forth excitedly. “As long as the group is okay with me staying overnight?”

“Come on, toots,” said Kennedi, mimicking her cowgirl accent again. “I reckon Tex’s one-eyed rattlesnake needs a-drainin’. And you’re just the outlaw we’re looking for.”

“I have no idea what she just said,” admitted Lauren. “Do any of you?”

“I think she’s saying you’re in the group,” said Cassidy. “Welcome to the family!”

“And we’re glad to have another friend,” added Paulina, hugging her. “We really are.”

Judging by the tears in Lauren’s eyes, she was just as thrilled to have what she’d been searching for all along.

People that accepted her.

Chapter Nineteen

Before we could leave, I was approached by one more person inside the courthouse—none other than Judge Fairchild herself.

“You played a very dangerous game today, young man,” she said, while still managing to give me a firm look as she flapped her wings by my side. “You know your case almost got fully dismissed, don’t you?”

I nodded. “We didn’t have many options on this one, but it was my hope that Esther would remember her roots and help us in the end.”

“I’ve seen a lot of things in my time as a judge, but this is one of the more memorable,” she admitted. “I’ve never seen a plaintiff abandon her own team and join the defendants. Today is definitely one for the record books.”

“I work for a remarkable company,” I said, feeling pride in my chest as I said it. “And with an amazing group of people.”

“Well, that’s partly why I need to ask for your help,” she said. “I sit on the board for my condo association, which occupies the entirety of the Woolmont Building. You know, that once with the amazing dragon spiral at the top?”

I knew what she was talking about just by leaving it at the Woolmont Building. It was one of the tallest buildings in the entire city, a glimmering masterpiece of architecture that was known to house the richest of fairies in luxury penthouse suites that spanned several floors.

It was the white whale when it came to jobs in the city. Not that we hadn’t tried to apply for maid service with the building before, but they’d always maintained that they were content with their current provider, so that sparked my curiosity.

“I know all about the building, and we’ve applied for maid service jobs there before,” I said. “But I knew there was a company servicing the entire building that’s been there for years.”

“They *were* there for years,” said Fairchild, annoyed. “Unfortunately, the owner has decided to retire, and from the sounds of things, her children

don’t want to run the company any longer. So we’re in desperate need of maid service for the entire building.”

I gulped hard, feeling my heart in my chest. “GGMS can help with that. We’ll be the maid service you need!”

Fairchild smiled for the first time today. “That would be lovely. Here’s my contact information. I think we can work something out. Congratulations on your win today.”

I felt like I was holding gold when she handed me a small card with her information on it. Getting the Woolmont Building would replace all the losses we suffered and more.

It was the quickest way to get Goblin Girl Maid Service back on track.

At that moment, I knew our company was back on the road of success.

That night, I had the best time of any in recent memory.

As soon as we left the courtroom, the group split up in several ways. Paulina and Sadie were the ones that went home right away, mostly because Paulina was exhausted and wanted to get off her feet. Cassidy came with me as we went back to our office, where we soon placed calls out to all the former employees that had been poached away by EHS, offering to bring them back on as they were before.

I put out a new listing for maids, knowing that the addition of the Woolmont would mean that work would again become plentiful. I also made a couple phone calls to two different people, thinking that tonight would be the perfect night for a reunion of sorts.

By the time I left the office, I had commitments from several of the maids that we lost, as well as Misty and Gina, who agreed to return to work at our office.

It was like getting the band back together for one more tour, except this one was greater than all that came before it.

When Cassidy and I got back to the office, we saw that Kennedi, Bridgette, and Nikki were getting back from doing a little shopping for dinner. Their arms were full of pizzas, alcohol, and even several boxes of zander nut cookies which had been procured at a local baker.

“I don’t know if they’re as good as homemade ones,” said Kennedi cautiously. “But we’ll try them out! And if we’re all drunk enough, all food tastes good.”

“Great,” murmured Paulina. “I get to be a bowling ball tonight surrounded by drunks.”

“Polly, everything will be just fine,” said Kennedi, wrapping her arm around Paulina’s back and pulling her close.

The last person to arrive at dinner was Lauren. When she separated from us at the courtroom, it was to go back to her place. She’d put together several sets of clothing in a bag, and she looked ready to stay a few nights when she arrived.

“I really hope this is okay?” she asked hesitantly, as I took her bag from her. “I don’t want to presume anything. And if you need me to go, I will go, I promise.”

Kennedi sighed dramatically. “Okay seriously, will you two just fuck already and get it over with? The tension is killing me.”

“It’s killing *you*?” I said, raising an eyebrow.

“Yeah, it’s terrible how much the chemistry between you two affects me,” said Kennedi, continuing to ham it up. “So either fuck now before dinner or fuck after dinner. Or better yet, fuck before *and* after dinner! Either way, you two need to do the no-pants dance and get it over with.”

Sadie shook her head. “Kennedi, has anyone ever told you that you just have a way with words?”

“Actually, no, no one has,” admitted Kennedi.

Sadie snorted. “Yeah, I’m not surprised by that.”

“They should probably wait until our guests arrive though, right?” asked Cassidy, giving me a subtle look. It was just enough to jog my memory.

“Oh, right!” I said. “We have guests coming! So all sexual activity needs to be delayed for the time being.”

“I hope it’s not because of us! Because we love sexual activity!”

We all turned suddenly to see the familiar faces of Andy and Greta at the door. The two aging hippies put their hands together and bowed before an excited Kennedi ran down the hall to greet them.

“Aunt Greta! Uncle Andy! What are you doing here?”

“We got word there was a groovy party happening here tonight,” said Andy, putting his hand on my shoulder. “Don’t worry—we brought mushrooms.”

“And herbal tea!” called out Greta.

As if to emphasize the point, Andy farted loudly. “Sorry. Been into that damn tea already. It’s delicious, but it makes me very gassy.”

“What doesn’t make you gassy, Uncle Andy?” snickered Kennedi.

“True enough. Can we eat now? I’m starved!”

“One moment, I’m waiting for one more person to show up,” I said, approaching the window and looking outside.

“But who else could we possibly be waiting for?” asked Nikki. “The pizza’s getting cold! And elvish pizza is not meant to be served cold.”

When I saw our final guest out the window, I knew everything was complete. I ran out to greet her while also preparing her for what she would find inside.

“You’re sure you still want to do this?” I asked her. “It’s been a long time.”

“Yes, it has,” she agreed. “But it’s very much past due.”

When I threw open the door again, Andy and Greta came face-to-face with someone they hadn’t seen in thirty years.

“Surprise!” said Blossom, holding out her hands and smiling. “Do you both remember me?”

Greta’s mouth fell open. Andy was so surprised that another fart slipped out. If Blossom cared, she didn’t show it because the three aging hippies soon collided into one giant group hug.

A hug where there were tears flowing immediately.

“I’m so sorry for everything, Blossom,” said Greta. “You have no idea how much I missed you.”

“As much as I missed you,” said Blossom. “I couldn’t help but regret what happened between us. I just figured you and Andy moved on and didn’t want to see me again.”

“Nothing could be further from the truth,” said Andy. “We missed you terribly. But we were too prideful to seek you out until it was too late.”

After the apologies were given, it was just like old times for them. As we started to hand out the plates of pizza, the three of them were talking like no time had passed. Any sins of the past had long been forgotten.

“I can’t believe they let thirty years go by without reaching out to someone they truly loved,” said Paulina, hugging my side. “It’s so cute to see them reunited again, but I can’t help but be a little depressed that it took them so long to do it.”

“I think they just needed a little push,” I said. “They never would have done it on their own. Too much pride. The kicker was that Andy didn’t even remember what they were so upset about. Pride will make you do funny things, but it should never prevent you from being with the people you love.”

“I don’t think we’ll ever have that problem,” said Paulina, squeezing me. “The people I love are in this house. And I don’t intend to ever let them go.”

Paulina was right. We were all in a remarkably good place. Everyone was happy, the business was secure, and now our family was about to grow by one more person soon.

I couldn’t have asked for a better outcome.

Everything that I’d wanted so badly from my old life had come true in Dragonmont City. And now that we were on the cusp of forever, I could

look to the future with confidence and just a dash of pride.

As Andy, Greta, and Blossom made up for lost time, we dove into the pizza and truly celebrated. After a raucous dinner, the group splintered as several people went off to get in the hot tub while other groups went to Kennedi's room to game.

For the reunited throuple though, we put aside a separate room for their convenience. They disappeared inside looking like teenagers again, while Kennedi put on some very loud music outside. In her own words, "no one wants to listen to aging hippies fuck."

Funnily enough, she had a point.

The music helped to hide another pairing too. Lauren and I retreated to my room and locked the door, where we soon found ourselves in bed together. As confident as the kitsune was in the courtroom, I noticed she was decidedly anxious as I held her nude body under the sheets.

"You don't think we're moving too quickly?" she asked nervously, her voice trembling just a little. "You can say no if you want. I don't want to force this on you."

"You're not forcing anything on me," I said with a slight chuckle. "I want this. And I want you."

Lauren let out a deep breath. "I want you too. I think about you more often than I'd like to admit. I can't remember feeling this way before about anyone. Not until I met you."

"Then I think it's time we did something about it."

She smiled. "I couldn't agree more."

With that being said, I nestled between her silken thighs. Taking hold of my cock, I placed myself at the entrance to her body. I pushed in slowly, taking my time so I didn't hurt her. I watched her fox ears twitch as her body accepted mine until I was all the way in.

"Wow," said Lauren finally, adjusting herself once I was fully inside. "I feel like I ate too much pizza."

I couldn't help myself. I snorted, which made her laugh. We laughed together, which felt very interesting on my cock since I could feel her

body’s movements through it.

“So what do we do now?” asked Lauren.

I cupped her cheek with my hand. “We just do what feels natural.”

Lauren nodded, and I felt a subtle amount of pressure as she pushed back against me. From that moment onward, we enjoyed each other with a rhythm that increasingly built in speed. That it was my sharp-tongued kitsune that was under me only added to my enjoyment.

It felt like we’d truly earned this, and now that victory was at hand, we could savor all the rewards that went with it.

“Oh yes,” whimpered Lauren after a particularly deep thrust. “Oh, that’s so deep.”

“Feel good?” I asked.

She nodded her head quickly before arching her back. “So good. So deep, but oh so fucking good.”

I couldn’t agree more. Lauren’s body felt incredible. From the softness of her skin to even the way her tail brushed against my bare thigh, it was different than being with any other girl in the house. It was part of the reason why I liked her so much. Lauren wasn’t the zany Kennedi or the seductive Bridgette. She was my overworked kitsune lawyer, and I was more than happy to love her as she was.

Soon she propped herself up on both elbows, pressing her chest into mine. We were both getting sweaty, and I noticed a faint red ring around the base of her neck from the strength of the exertion. Our rhythm was building in pace, and I knew I wasn’t going to last much longer.

“Lauren, I’m gonna cum,” I told her, right when I felt myself reaching the point of no return.

“M-me too,” she said, before moaning loudly in my ear. “Same time?”

It felt like my cock roared in agreement to that question. I wanted her to cum with me, to reach that plateau of ecstasy at the same moment. I just had to hold out . . . just a little bit longer.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuuuuuuck,” said Lauren, really stretching out the last one as her orgasm hit.

The moment I felt her slippery walls begin to squeeze, I lost control. We held onto each other as we came, and I dropped a heavy amount of cum into her waiting body.

By the time we both came back down to reality, we were exhausted and sweaty, but we couldn’t stop kissing. Everything about being with Lauren just felt right, but in my moment of orgasm, I hadn’t realized what Lauren had done.

It all came to me when I was done seeing stars. I felt something furry squeezing my waist. Looking down, I could see exactly what it was.

It was Lauren’s tail.

When I met her eyes, she looked almost embarrassed that I knew the truth. But I could see a boldness there that meant this hadn’t occurred by accident.

“You’re sure about this then?” I asked, cupping her cheek. “You see this going the distance?”

She nodded quickly. “I really do. I hope that doesn’t scare you, but I really see this being a long-term thing.”

“Good,” I said finally, grinning. “I’m glad we’re on the same page.”

Hearing those words, Lauren threw her arms around my neck and squeezed. “I’m so happy that I met you. And I’m so grateful that you left that file behind in my office.”

I chuckled. “Can you imagine what would have happened if I didn’t?”

“No, I really don’t want to,” she said, biting her lip as she grinned at me. “Do you want to know something? I think I finally figured it out.”

“Figured what out?”

“Your fatal flaw? Remember talking about that?”

“Of course,” I said. “So what’s mine?”

“You just . . . care so much. You care about the people around you. You care about the business, your family, and even the little things that most people don’t care about. I think that’s what makes you so unique. You care when you could so easily not care.”

In a way, Lauren was right. My two main priorities in my life were the business and the well-being of the people that I loved. In all cases, those priorities went hand-in-hand. Maybe I cared too much at times, but I wasn’t afraid to be unabashedly . . . me.

“When you say it like that, it doesn’t sound like much of a flaw,” I said.

“Some people would see it as a flaw, or a weakness,” said Lauren. “Other lawyers would. The people that run EHS would. But not me. I see it for what it really is—the source of your biggest strength.”

“This feels like a weird interview question,” I joked.

Lauren giggled. “Don’t worry. You’ve already got the job.”

“Yeah, you’re sure about that?”

She nodded quickly. “Oh, I’m very sure.”

I opened my mouth to say something when the door to my room crashed open suddenly. Of course it was Kennedi that was at the door, and I suspected she couldn’t wait until we were finished to tease us about this.

“Couldn’t you at least wait until we get to the kitchen?” I asked Kennedi. “You’re ruining tradition right now, Kennedi.”

She didn’t laugh. “Tradition can wait. Paulina just went into labor.”

Approximately thirteen hours and forty sleepless minutes later, our entire family gathered around Paulina and me to welcome the birth of our daughter. It was approximately 10:02 in the morning when our daughter entered the world, and despite feeling like a bundle of nerves the entire time we were at the hospital, I couldn’t help but let my chest fill with pride from the moment I held her for the first time.

“Look how precious she is!” cooed Sadie, stroking the baby’s hand with her little finger. “Oh my spirits, I love her!”

“Another little priestess of Malfiore was born today,” said Nikki. “I love her already!”

“Let’s wait until she gets a little older to give her life over to Malfiore, okay?” said an exhausted Paulina.

“Okay, we’ll wait until she’s at least two,” said Nikki.

Paulina smacked her head. “That’s so not what I meant.”

“It’s okay,” said Kennedi, taking the baby in her arms. “She wants to be just like her auntie, doesn’t she? A badass gaming goddess, don’t you, sweet girl?”

“Funny, I thought you just described me,” said Sadie.

“Maybe she wants to be a lawyer?” asked Lauren, still beaming with a post-sex smile that was hard for anyone to ignore.

“Why don’t we let her decide when she gets old enough?” said Paulina. “No matter what she does, she’s going to be just perfect.”

“And she’s going to be totally spoiled,” joked Cassidy.

Kennedi elbowed me. “And to think, in the last twenty-four hours you’ve added two more women to your life that have you wrapped around their fingers.”

Before I could answer, she put her arm around Lauren’s shoulders. “Ain’t that right, Tex?”

Lauren was at least a good sport. She put on her best accent in her reply. “Mhm, I reckon!”

“Oh, she’s going to get along with us just fine,” said Sadie, waving her hand. “She’s already part Kennedi by the sounds of it.”

“We all could use a little Kennedi inside us,” said Kennedi not-so-humbly. “Maybe we could name her after me?”

“I’m not calling her Kennedi Moonbeam,” said Paulina with a deadpan expression.

Kennedi turned red. “I didn’t mean the moonbeam part.”

“I’m only teasing,” said Paulina. “I’m not sure about a name just yet. But would you settle for goblin-mother? I think that’s pretty fair, don’t you?”

The rest of the goblin girls gasped at hearing that. I watched as stunned looks appeared on their faces as Kennedi started to tear up. She brought her hand to her mouth as she struggled with her words.

“I would be . . . *honored*,” she said.

The two women hugged, and for me, all felt truly right with the world. A short while later, we had a visit from Andy, Greta, and Blossom, who looked not-so-surprisingly chipper after the events of last night. They seemed to bury the hatchet between them, and when asked about their future plans, Blossom started to blush.

“I was thinking about moving to Green Goblin Beach,” she said. “To be closer to the people I care about.”

“Yes, and we know just the place she’s going to stay,” said Greta, hooking her arm through Blossom’s.

“Is it weird that my aunt and uncle are back in a harem now?” Kennedi asked me quietly. “Because it feels a little weird to me.”

“It’s more weird that they’re all hippies,” I said. “But we can’t exactly say anything. Our harem is bigger.”

“Fuckin’ right it is,” said Kennedi, taking that in a competitive way that only made me shake my head.

Her aunt and uncle didn’t end up staying for very long before they left, which was a good thing since Paulina just wanted to get some sleep. I sent most of the girls home by the late afternoon, and it allowed the two of us to spend some quality time with our daughter.

“She really is perfect,” muttered Paulina, as we laid in the hospital bed together, just watching our daughter sleep against her chest. “I was wondering how she was going to come out too. She looks just like a goblin, but she has your eyes and your nose.”

“A very good thing for her is that she looks mostly like her mother,” I joked. “I’m glad she doesn’t have my giant feet too.”

“I didn’t know how I would feel when she was actually here,” said Paulina. “Part of me wondered what it would be like to be a mom. Would I be a bad one? A good one? A middle-of-the-road one? Would I feel anything when I held her for the first time? But you know something? I feel so much love for her right now. I don’t even know this little baby in my arms, but I love her as much as I love you.”

“She’s the best of both of her parents,” I said, kissing Paulina’s cheek. “Which means she’s a lot more you than she is me.”

“I bet she’ll have your personality,” said Paulina. “Maybe my looks, but I hope she acts like you. If she does, there won’t be a problem in the world she can’t solve. She’ll be so important to the people that love her.”

“She’ll be loved very much,” I said. “There’s no doubt about it. And she’s going to have lots of zany aunts.”

Paulina giggled. “That she will. But I hope she has a good life. I hope she knows that the best is yet to come.”

“I’m sure she will,” I agreed firmly.

Paulina let out a deep breath. “Do you remember when I told you I was pulling back from the business? When I stopped taking maid jobs so we could spread the work around a little more?”

“Dark days, but yes I do,” I said.

Paulina turned her attention back to the baby. “I think I want to continue that. Let the newer girls have the maid opportunities for now. I want to focus on making GGMS the best business it can be. I just want to be its owner, not another maid. And every other spare second I have I want to spend with you and her.”

“I think that’s a great decision,” I said. “Between you and me, there’s nothing we can’t handle. And if stepping back lets you focus on being a mom, then I’m all for it.”

“I just feel like it’s time. It’s time to start a new chapter in our lives. It’s time to prepare for the future,” she said, looking at the baby. “No matter what shape it might take.”

I kissed her softly. “To the future then. Our future.”

“I love you so much,” she whispered to me.

“I love you too.”

At that moment, I knew everything that happened to me happened for a reason. I was meant to meet Paulina and to join GGMS. We were meant to compete with Esther, to battle for our hard-fought position of respect inside the city.

We’d even fought Goliath, in the shape of EHS, and triumphed.

And none of it would have happened without being reborn in Dragonmont City. I had everything that I ever wanted, and now it was time to really enjoy what my life had become.

And it was all possible because of a stunning goblin girl in a maid outfit.

How surprising life can be.

Do You Know?

I write using three different pen names. Which pen name I use mostly depends on what genre I’m writing in.

Tyler Bowman focuses on sci-fi and space opera stories.

Shane Hammond focuses on progression fantasy and LitRPGs.

Landon Scott focuses on cozy slice of life adventures.

If you’re interested in seeing what I’m currently working on, come join my Patreon. All my stories get uploaded there first, as well as some really cool things like artwork for all my female characters. Come check it out if you want to support me.

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